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**LETTER**

To the <sup>to Collins</sup> AUTHOR of the

**DISCOURSE**

OF THE

**GROUND and REASONS**

OF THE

*Christian* **RELIGION,**

IN ANSWER TO

**Mr. GREEN'S LETTERS, &c.**

With a

**P O S T S C R I P T**

Occasion'd by

**Dr. LOBB'S *Brief Defence*, &c.**

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*If my [novel] sense of the prophecy [Behold a Virgin shall conceive, &c.] will not serve, some other sense may in time be found out.*

GREEN'S Letters, p. 85.

*Thou mayst be sure it is true, tho' there should be ten thousand difficulties objected to thee, which thou art not able to answer.*

LOBB'S Brief Defence, p. 97.

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**L O N D O N:**

Printed for A. MOORE, near St. Paul's, 1726.

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# P R E F A C E.



THE delay of the publication of the following *Letter, &c.* gives me an opportunity to add something in this place on occasion of a new book of Mr. GREEN's, intituled, *A Discourse proving the Resurrection of Christ, and shewing that it is a sufficient demonstration of the truth of Christianity.*

I. Mr. GREEN after observing, that the \* reader will find a reflection or \* *Prose.* two on some passages in a Discourse of the Grounds, &c. adds, that his taking notice of this book, after having lately made some remarks upon it in five Letters to the author, does not proceed from any disrespect to that gentleman, but a regard to truth. And therefore, having been told that I † insinuate, says Mr. † *Letters,* GREEN, that the said author is an enemy † *p. 26.* to natural religion, I freely own, that had I been sensible, that my words would have  
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*born such construction, I should have expressed myself in a different manner.*

Upon which I think it proper to make the following observations:

1. Writing against a book, we conceive erroneous, is so reasonable a thing, has so direct a tendency to the information of men, and is also so kind, civil, and human in itself, [as implying good-will to to the author of the book and to all the world,] that to make an apology for such writing, as *not proceeding from disrespect* to the *author*, is either charging others with being ridiculously offended, or supposes some *disrespectful* design or conduct, which needs an assurance in words, that *no disrespect* was intended, in order to qualify what would probably be deemed *disrespectful*. But however this be, Mr. GREEN had no need to make any apology on account of the *author* he opposes; that *author* being, I am persuaded, not in the least concern'd about *any disrespect* shewn him, who could not publish such a work, as he has done, without supposing and despising *disrespect*; which I own I am surprized to find injures not him in the world's opinion, but only those who use it, insomuch, that for their own sakes they are forc'd to make apologies.

2. Professions [and even the most solemn asseverations] are of no weight when men are under accusations of guilt; and men are to be tried by the facts, upon which the accusations are grounded, and not by Professions subsequent to those accusations. Is there any difficulty in supposing, that a man, who does an ill thing, should endeavour to recover his reputation, by doing another? Men say and do many foolish or ill things, which they sometimes think to receive applause for from the world: but finding themselves discover'd, or themselves deceiv'd in their expectations, they run to excuses and pretended intentions, to throw off guilt; which all men are backward to own of themselves. And it seems more natural for men, who have said an ill thing, to pretend they meant otherwise than their words import [thereby covering themselves with what cannot be demonstratively disprov'd] than by acknowledging guilt; which they think will discover too plainly what sort of men they are.

3. Mr. GREEN'S words having *the construction*, he mentions, put upon them [I presume by his friends; and I add by every body, I have met with, who presently observ'd the impertinence and malice thereof] as the natural *construction*, or *probable construction*, ought justly to



have that *construction* put upon them: for calumny is what men generally endeavour to disguise a little, at the same time, that they design it to be understood. And he is exceedingly unfortunate, when he intended to be civil, and was absolutely innocent of all crime, that he should write so, that all men [his friends not excepted] should think his words would bear a *construction*, that implied the utmost rudeness and calumny, whereof they did not think him incapable!

4. As to his Profession, *viz.* that *taking notice of the Discourse of the Grounds proceeded not from any disrespect to the author, but regard to truth, and owning, upon his having been told, that he insinuated the author of the Discourse to be an enemy to natural religion, that had he been sensible his words would have born such a construction, he would have expressed himself in a different manner;* I must observe, that I *have been told* [since *having been told* is, it seems, a sufficient foundation for introducing personal matters into a theological controversy] that Mr. GREEN'S *Letters* were originally fraught with personal abuses, many of which, upon the advice of friends, he struck out, nay, took a journey to *London* on purpose to reform his  
work

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work in that respect, after his papers had been sent to the press; and that his book being all writ in that spirit, it seems natural to suppose, either that he should not easily be able to mark or blot out all his strokes of that kind [for many such are still left] or else, that he should designedly leave in some few strokes, for the reason aforesaid.

II. As to his *reflection* or two upon some passages in the *Discourse of the Grounds*, in the book before us, I observe, that his first reflection is, “ that  
 “ \* there is no reason to speak [with a \* p. 30.  
 “ late † author] of *Jonas’s* lying three † *Disc.*  
 “ days and three whole nights in the *of the*  
 “ whale’s belly, and then coming out of p. 10, 11.  
 “ it, as an *allegory* of CHRIST’S resur- 93, 94.  
 “ rection; or to represent JESUS or his  
 “ Apostles arguing from it.” He then proceeds to shew, that JESUS did not make such use of it, but argued after another manner from it.

In answer to which I say,

[I.] *First*, That the *Discourse of the Grounds* does not represent JESUS, as arguing *allegorically* from the case of JONAS, and proving his *resurrection* from thence, nor takes any manner of notice of the use JESUS makes of the history of JONAS, but takes notice only of St. PAUL’S arguing

arguing *allegorically* from thence. Mr. GREEN's *reflection* or argument therefore, if deem'd pertinent to the *Discourse*, must stand thus, "That JESUS's using the  
 " history of JONAS to one purpose, proves  
 " St. Paul could not use it to another  
 " purpose, no ways inconsistent with the  
 " purpose of JESUS!"

[2.] As to there being *no reason to represent* the Apostle's [that is St. PAUL] arguing *allegorically* from the history of JONAS, in behalf of CHRIST'S RESURRECTION, which the *Discourse* represents St. PAUL to do, and is the sole matter in question; Mr. GREEN says not one word in particular to that point, and consequently has given no occasion for any reply. However, I will observe in behalf of the *Discourse*, that when the *Discourse* speaks of St. Paul's arguing *allegorically* from the history of JONAS, it speaks according to the common interpretation of the \* words of St. PAUL, saying expressly, that † PAUL is *suppos'd* [that is, by some of his interpreters] to ground his assertion, &c. on the history of JONAS, as well as from the || necessity of so understanding St. PAUL. And therefore, it would have been as proper for Mr. GREEN to have given us his bare affirmation against the christian interpreters, and to have said they had *no reason*, as to say, that

\* 1 Cor.

xv. 4.

† *Disc.*

p. 11.

|| *Ibid.*

p. 94.



that the *author of the Discourse* had no reason; and withal, if such an assertion in the *Discourse* any way impeach'd the doctrine of CHRIST's *resurrection*, to direct to the true and original quiver from whence that arrow proceeded, and not to the *Discourse* which follows those christians interpreters.

III. His next reflection is, “ \* That \* p. 31.  
 “ CHRIST's resurrection was the accom-  
 “ plishment of his own predictions; and  
 “ that prophecy is represented by the  
 “ author of *the Discourse of the Grounds*,  
 “ as the best foundation, whereon to  
 “ build any religion, who expressly tells  
 “ us, that *prophecies in an inspir'd book*,  
 “ are, when fulfill'd, such as may be  
 “ justly deem'd sure and demonstrative  
 “ proofs. And since the *prophecies* be-  
 “ ing deliver'd by an *inspir'd person*,  
 “ *vivâ voce*, makes not the least altera-  
 “ tion in the argument, the *resurrection*  
 “ of CHRIST, being a *fulfilling* of his  
 “ *prophecies*, is justly to be deem'd a sure  
 “ and demonstrative proof of the truth of  
 “ christianity.”

This reflection is so far from having any opposition to the *Discourse*, that it is giving it a sort of divine authority, and proving from thence, to his † common Peo- † Pref.  
 ple, the certain foundation of *Christia-*  
 nity. But if he intends it for a part of  
 his

his *demonstration of Christianity* to the *Deists*, I conceive it defective, without proving the *inspiration* of the *Person* speaking, [which one wou'd think, he shou'd know, ought not to be taken for granted,] and without proving, that the Prophecies attributed to him, which were not publish'd till long after the [suppos'd] accomplishment, were deliver'd *vivâ voce*, before the said accomplishment: which will require a proof of the authority of the books of the New Testament. Till he has done that, the prophecies spoken of will not be *deem'd sure and demonstrative proofs*: nor will a produc'd prophecy and a produc'd accomplishment have any effect on a *Deist*; who, at first view, will suppose the prophecy invented for the sake of the event, or both prophecy and event invented. The force of prophecy in the question of the *Messias*, as urg'd in the *Discourse*, both to prove the Old Testament an *inspir'd Book*, and to prove JESUS the *Messias*, lies in this, that he accomplishes prophecies in the Old Testament; which is a book that undoubtedly existed before the times of JESUS, and cannot have been alter'd since his times in his favour, no more than to his prejudice.

IV. His whole book may be conceiv'd a *reflection* on or argument against the  
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*Discourse*. Upon which therefore I will make an Observation or two here, reserving the full consideration of his book to another occasion.

The first part of his book, attempting a proof of the *resurrection* of JESUS, is nothing to the *Discourse*: nor is it argumentative to *Deists*, who justly want more and other proof, than the mere producing *witnesses* from the New Testament; the authority whereof they admit not: to say nothing of his choice, and managing of his *witnesses* after such a manner, as tends to discredit, rather than prove the *resurrection* of JESUS.

The second part of his book, which is both against the *Discourse*, and against the *Deists*, wherein he attempts to shew, that *the resurrection of Christ*, [as before prov'd by him,] *is a sufficient Demonstration of the truth of Christianity*, is weakness it self. For in the first place, he has not prov'd to the *Deists* the truth of the *resurrection* in a way proper for them. In the next place, if he had prov'd it in a proper way, that is, had made it out by all the proper topicks to be very probably true, [for that is all the matter will admit of, and what is only requir'd to be done in matters of faith;] yet that wou'd not be *sufficient to prove the truth of Christianity*, which is a Religion con-

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sisting of many particulars, and all built on the books of the Old and New Testament. The antiquity, authority, and inspiration of those books are therefore to be prov'd: in doing which, their morality is to be clear'd; their doctrines shewn to be not inconsistent with reason; the dependency of the New on the Old Testament manifested, and in particular the fundamental article of Christianity, that *JESUS of Nazareth is the Messias*, [or person foretold in the Old Testament] is the person there foretold; the harmony of all their parts with one another defended; and all shewn to tend to the glory of God, and good of men.----For if these things cannot be made out; or if any objections upon these heads cannot be answer'd; here is not only want of proof for some essential parts of Christianity, but objections started which not only destroy that consistency and reasonableness, which are necessary characters of a religion that comes from God, but, as not being to be answer'd, are demonstrations of the fallhood, of what can only be grounded on probability.

V. I will conclude this *Preface* with observing; that as the affair of Old-Testament *Prophecy* is absolutely necessary to be made out in a *demonstration of the truth of Christianity*, [the first and fundamental

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mental question in Christianity being, whether JESUS of Nazareth *be the Messias*, that is, *be* the person foretold in the Old Testament,] and consequently Mr. GREEN's *demonstration* defective for want of making out from the Old Testament, that *Jesus* is the Person there foretold: so it is the most proper topick, and most plain matter, whereon to put the cause of *Christianity*, and the properest *test* of its truth. The miracles reported in the New Testament to have been wrought; the gifts of the spirit said to be pour'd out on the faithful; and all other parts of the evidence for Christianity; are incapable of being consider'd in that just and certain light, (on account of the imperfect knowledge of things come down to us,) as is the matter of *Prophecy*; which is most easy to receive satisfaction about, by seeing, whether the *Messias* be prophecy'd of in the Old Testament, a book certainly extant before the times of JESUS, and appeal'd to by JESUS and his Apostles in numerous places. In a word, the prophecies of the Old Testament, if fulfill'd in the new, are not only miracles, but such miracles as are capable of the fullest proof: and if the events said in the New Testament to be foretold in the Old be not foretold, the suppos'd miracles, of prophecies accomplish'd, will receive the fullest

fullest confutation. I must own therefore, that Mr. GREEN's and others, who pretend to give a *demonstration of Christianity*, independent on *prophecy*, seem to me implicitly to give up *Christianity*, by waving a point so absolutely necessary to its proof, and to be no real friends of truth, by thus declining the *easiest, most certain* and *best* way of *trial*, whether *Christianity* be true or false.

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### Errata of the Preface.

PAGE xi. Line 3. for human, read humane; l. 15. f. disrespectful, r. disrespe<sup>ct</sup>ful; l. 17. f. dire<sup>sp</sup>ect, r. disre<sup>sp</sup>ect; p. v. l. 4. after spirit, r. for the honour of J. C. p. vii. l. 8. f. christians, r. christian; p. ix. l. 30. f. faith, r. fact; p. xii. l. 2. f. Green's, r. Green.

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LETTER  
TO THE  
AUTHOR  
OF A  
DISCOURSE, &c.

S I R,

I Here send you my animadversions on the *Letters* which Mr. *Green* has address'd to you, and which, I presume, you will never answer. But yet, it seems proper, that something should be said to *them*, and that another should defend you against one, who, in some places, has assaulted you in a most *immoral manner*. For tho' you may forgive him for those personal attacks, and charitably judge his conduct to flow from his education, and sort of religion, and not from any particular enmity to you, and forbear all resentment in your own case; yet his behaviour ought not to pass unresented by others, if they would shew a just concern for the most essential part of religion, *morality*, and the branches thereof, which are of the most universal extent, *humanity* and *charity*, or even for the speculative doctrines of religion, which are then most likely to be set in the best light, when the controvertists keep their temper, and do not give

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vent to any malicious insinuations, which must necessarily be impertinent to the argument.

## I.

His first Letter is grounded on a mistake, which runs through it; wherein he represents  
 \* Green's Letters, p. 11, 12. you as maintaining, that the \* *Apostles prove the facts of the new testament by passages or prophecies taken out of the old, and not by testimony.*

This matter, which he charges on you, is such an absurdity in itself, and so clearly excluded by your own express words, from being your sentiment or design, and is a misrepresentation of such a nature, that I may justly expect to be condemn'd for entering the lists of controversy with one who was capable of it.

† Discourse, p. 5. Your express words are, "† St. MATTHEW  
 " proves several parts of christianity from  
 " the old testament, either by *shewing them*  
 " to be things foretold, as to come to pass under  
 " the gospel dispensation, or to be agreeable  
 " to, or founded on the notions of the old  
 " testament." Wherein the word *proves* [which  
 || Letters, p. 1. is a word he || singles out, and builds upon,  
 without regard to your own explication thereof in the words immediately following it] has no relation to the proof of any christian facts, but means, *shewing those facts* [which are suppos'd facts, prov'd in a proper way, that is, by testimony] to be things  
 \*\* See also Discourse, p. 29, 37. foretold, as to come to pass under the gospel dispensation.

But lest this should be mistaken by others, by the means of Mr. Green, give me leave to explain

explain your sense yet more distinctly by an instance; which I will so express, as to make it a key to this whole controversy.

1. The fundamental article of christianity is, that *JESUS of Nazareth is the Messiah*, or person promised in the old testament.

2. Whether *JESUS of Nazareth* be the *Messiah*, or person promised in the old testament, must be try'd and prov'd by the old testament.

3. That trying and proving from the old testament, whether *JESUS of Nazareth* be the *Messiah*, includes in it all proper considerations of the *facts* relating to the *Messiahship* of *JESUS*, told in the new testament. For how, for example, can the miraculous conception of the *Messiah*, his birth at *Bethlehem*, his miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension, which are some of the *facts* relating to the *Messiah* told in the new testament, and supposed to be prophesied of in the old testament, be urged as applicable to *JESUS*, but by producing those *facts*, as gone through and perform'd by *JESUS*? And what is producing those *facts*, but producing those *facts* attested by good witnesses?

At the close of this letter, he urges a particular that has a real opposition to you, and which I shall consider, when I have stated, in your own words, the matter to which he objects.

After you had maintain'd, that if the prophecies of the old testament are fulfilled in *JESUS*, then is \* *christianity establis'd on a valid* \* *Discour.*  
*foundation*, you assert on the † *other side*, that p. 27.  
*if the prophecies cited from the old testament be not* † *Ibid.*  
*fulfill'd, then has christianity no just foundation: for* p. 31.



the foundation, on which JESUS and his apostles built it, is then invalid and false. Nor can, add you, miracles, said to be wrought by JESUS and his apostles, in behalf of christianity, avail any thing in the case; for miracles can never make a prophecy fulfill'd, which is not fulfill'd, and can never mark out a Messiah, or JESUS for the Messiah, if both are not mark'd out in the old testament. And you say, that miracles, said to be wrought, may be often justly deem'd false reports, when attributed to persons who claim an authority from the old testament, which they impertinently alledge to support their pretences. Against this Mr. Green argues, that

\* Letters, *\* your fine reasoning signifies nothing at all, for it serves*  
 p. 17. *his purpose as much as yours. To make out which*  
*he thus proceeds; " If, says he, the arguments*  
*" to prove that Jesus rose from the dead, and*  
*" that numerous and wonderful miracles were*  
*" wrought by him and his apostles be conclusive,*  
*" these things were certainly so; nor can the*  
*" charging them with laying an invalid foun-*  
*" dation for christianity, making false infe-*  
*" rences, misapplying prophecies, marking*  
*" out one for the Messiah, who was not*  
*" mark'd out in the old testament, claiming*  
*" thence an authority without reason, and*  
*" impertinently alledging it to support their*  
*" pretences, avail any thing in the case: For*  
*" such things as these can never render that no*  
*" resurrection which was a resurrection, or*  
*" those no miracles which were miracles, or*  
*" those no facts which were facts; can never*  
*" make a true history false. This, adds he,*  
*" proves nothing on either side, and is no*  
*" more than to say, that that which is true,*  
*" can by no means be proved to be false."*  
 But in the further prosecution of his matter,  
 he,

he, some what inconsistently with this, carries his argument further, and supposes, that, when the *Messiahship* of *Jesus* is prov'd by \* *miracles*, such Proof remains good, and cannot be overthrown by any *objection*, on the head of prophecy; which cannot be answer'd. \*Letter V.

To which I answer,

1. That whether *JESUS* of *Nazareth* be the *Messiah* promised in the old testament, can only be try'd and prov'd from the old testament.

2. That *JESUS CHRIST* appealing to the old testament, as prophesying of him, it is but justice to him, to examine him by that *criterion*.

3. That the meaning of books is to be settled by the common rules of interpreting books, and not by *miracles*, which are not *mediums*, or rules, to mark out the meaning of books: and that when the *Bereans* are commended for *searching the scriptures*, or old testament, to see, whether what the apostles preached was true, or no, it was for their endeavouring to try the apostles doctrine by the old testament, interpreted by the common rules of interpreting books, and not by the sense given of those books by *JESUS* and his apostles, who are suppos'd to have wrought *miracles* for the justness of the sense they had given of those books: for if miracles had been a just *medium* to fix the sense of those books, there needed no search to find out their sense, which had already been made evident by *miracles*; nay, such a search, as engaging them in the difficulties suppos'd and allowed by *Mr. Green* to be in the affair of *prophecy*, and of the citations made

made out of the old testament by the apostles, would not only have been needless, but have embarrassed them about a matter, that was fully prov'd before.

In a word, is it not exceedingly absurd in the question of *transubstantiation*, the determination whereof depends on the meaning of these words, *this is my body*, to quit the context, wherein they are found, and to consider, whether *transubstantiation* be held forth in that place, from the numerous *miracles* attested to be wrought in divers ages of the church in behalf of that doctrine, or by the late *miracle*, said to be wrought publickly in the city of *Paris*, and attested to by *threescore* chosen witnesses, and publish'd and proclaim'd by a great christian prelate, his eminency the *Cardinal de Noailles*, archbishop of *Paris*, and believ'd by every christian, or not publickly deny'd by any, in the city or country where it was wrought?

Miracles, though ever so well attested, seem to me so improper a *medium* in the case, and to have so little relation to the determination of the true meaning of the words, *this is my body*, that I think no man is concern'd to enquire, whether they were ever done, or no, or to trouble himself about them, any more than about all the infinite relations of the like kind, vented to support the various and contradictory notions spread throughout the world. The sense of the words is plain, as consider'd with their context, and carry such evidence along with them against the doctrine of *transubstantiation*, as cannot be subverted by any foreign consideration, much less by any facts, attested and related by fallible men, whose



whose credibility and narrations are to be judged of by the histories we have of their proceedings in all ages of the world, and in all religions, and every day in the *roman* church, which pretends to a constant power to do miracles, in this matter of attested, or supposed ~~attested~~ miracles. It is said, that the pope lately *cast a devil* out of a man possess'd, publickly before his whole company at *mass*: But should he be said to have cast out ten thousand devils, or to have done any other miracles, no one ought in the least to be moved by them, so as to think, from them, that the *mass* or *popery* was taught in the *bible*.

4. That all parts of the christian *scheme* ought to be made out and defended, and especially the fundamental article thereof, that JESUS of *Nazareth* is the *Messiah*, or person promised in the old testament, by those who propose that it should be rationally receiv'd, by insisting on and making good the several foundations on which JESUS and his apostles founded his *Messiahship*, mission, and doctrines: And that one defect in the said *scheme*, and one argument against that *scheme*, which cannot be answer'd, affects the whole *scheme*.

For example, if it does not appear from the old testament, that JESUS, as characteriz'd in the new testament, is the *Messiah*, promised in the old, there is no pretence to proceed a step further towards the maintenance or support of christianity: For the term *Messiah* signifies a person there describ'd and foretold. And to talk of, and to pretend to believe in JESUS, as the person promis'd in a book, when that book is not to be our sole guide and rule, to know  
whether

whether he be promised in that book, or no, is, as appears to me, the greatest contradiction to common sense, and the greatest *satire* upon the *gospel*, and upon JESUS and his apostles, for appealing to the old testament, that is possible. It implies, that there is one book, which is to be interpreted differently from all other books: It implies, that the matter, for which an *appeal* is made, is not to be found in the book: It is flying in the face of JESUS CHRIST and his apostles, and declining an *appeal*, which they make: And, in a word, it discovers a mere pretended regard to JESUS CHRIST and his apostles, and a real regard to nothing but our own schemes.

Again, if the resurrection of JESUS from the *dead*, which is also an essential part of christianity, *first*, as it ought to come to pass as a fact supposed to be foretold in the old testament, and, *secondly*, as it is a fact testified of in the new testament, cannot be \* prov'd true, and defended, christianity fails: For if such a matter could be made out to be a falsehood, or to be destitute of proof, here is such a weakness, such a failure in evidence for christianity, as supercedes the consideration of any other topicks in its behalf, and, indeed, sufficiently implies, that every other part thereof must be invalid.

\* *Letters*,  
p. 8.

In a word, as the *Bereans* searched the *scriptures*, or old testament, to see, whether what the apostles taught was founded thereon, or no, and would have acted right in rejecting the teaching of the apostles, had they not found it in the old testament; so others would no less have acted rightly, in rejecting their teaching, if the *resurrection* of JESUS had not been

been made out to them; for as the apostle very well argues, \* *If CHRIST be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your Faith is also vain.* <sup>\*1 Cor. xv. 14.</sup>

You have consider'd matters like the *Bereans*, and have search'd the old testament, to find out the prophetic foundation of christianity; and if you have not *expressly* stated the affair of gospel miracles, and particularly the *miracle of the resurrection* of JESUS, the great *miracle of the gospel*; it was, because it was needless, and sufficiently obviated by you, and for other manifest reasons; but not for the † reason assign'd by Mr. *Green*, who pretends, by his prerogative, to know the secret of your heart, as well as the || secret of God. <sup>† Letters, p. 21.</sup>

Wherefore, all true defenders of christianity, must either maintain the whole, or give up the whole. <sup>|| 1b. Letters p. 4.</sup>

To pretend therefore, that miracles are a proof of the *Messiahship* of JESUS, upon a supposition, that the *Messiahship* is not, or cannot be made out, from the old testament, or that the test or proof thereof from the old testament may be declin'd, really implies, either that miracles are no proofs of christianity, [no less than declining, or not being able to prove the truth of the *resurrection*, implies prophecy, and all other arguments for christianity, invalid] or else implies the miracles not done, that is, without just proof that they were done. And let me add, with respect to Mr. *Green*, that if the *Messiahship* cannot be made out from the old testament, [which is a supposition only us'd in the way of argument; for you contend, like all christians, except one or two of your adversaries, that the *Messiahship*, is made out



from the old testament by the apostles, who endeavour to prove the jewish law and history, to be prophetick, or to be a type of the gospel,] I say, that if the *Messiahship* cannot be made out from the old testament, there is probably some defect in Mr. GREEN's assertions about those miracles, who says from the gospels, that \* *they were done in the most publick manner*, [he cannot mean the resurrection of JESUS from the dead ;] that they were related by eye and ear-witnesses, who had no ends to serve by imposing on the world, and several of whom laid down their lives, for the sake of a religion, which was founded on the facts related in them ; and who also affirms, the relations of those facts, to have been published at the time when they were fresh in every bodies memories. I say, a defect may be supposed in these mere assertions ; which he does not pretend to make out by distinct and clear proofs, in relation to the authors of the gospels, their authority, and divine inspiration ; to the time when the said gospels were publish'd ; to the particular condition, callings, lives, preaching, sufferings, and death of any of the apostles ; tho' I think it became him to do so, against such as he pretends to write against, who, he must know, pay no manner of regard to his mere assertions, and who, I suppose, he must say, would be guilty of a great fault, if they took any thing upon trust from him.

What I have said here, does, as I conceive, subvert and confute all that Mr. GREEN has said any where in his *letters*, and particularly in his third letter, [which is nothing but a scene of wrangling and mistakes,] upon the head of *miracles*, which has any real opposition

tion to you. And I shall conclude it with the judgments of three very learned and ingenious men, the two first whereof are your particular adversaries, and have a direct view to what you have said in your discourse, about miracles,

\* Dr. SHERLOCK says, *one of the characters, which our Saviour constantly assumes and claims in the gospel, is this, that he is the person spoken of by MOSES and the prophets. Whether he is this person, or no, must be try'd by the words of prophecy; and this makes the argument from prophecy so far necessary to establish the claim of the gospel; and it has been very justly, as well as acutely observed, [viz. by the author of the discourse of the grounds,] that the proof of this point must rely intirely on the evidence of prophecy. Miracles in this case afford no help: If the prophets have not spoken of CHRIT, all the miracles in the world will not prove they have spoken of him. And he says, that † as truth is consistent with itself, so this claim † must be made out, or it destroys all others.*

\* Sherlock's use and intent of prophecies, p. 49.

† Ib. p. 50.

Mr. SYKES || says, " There are a great  
 " many persons, who conceive, that christi-  
 " anity is sufficiently prov'd to be true, if  
 " the miracles and resurrection of JESUS are  
 " true; even without any regard to the  
 " prophecies, so often appealed to by him. But  
 " supposing the miracles to be true; yet no  
 " miracles can prove, that which is false in  
 " itself, to be true. If therefore the *Messiah*  
 " be not foretold in the old testament, no  
 " miracles can prove JESUS to be the *Messiah*  
 " foretold; nay, 'tis a stronger argument to  
 " prove JESUS to be an impostor, that he ap-  
 " pealed to prophecies, which were not pro-  
 " phecies, and, by that means, imposed upon

|| Sykes's essay on the truth of the christian religion, p. 2.

“ the ignorant people, than 'tis, that he  
 “ came from God, merely because he work'd  
 “ miracles, *False Christs and false prophets may*  
 “ arise, and may shew such great signs and won-  
 “ ders, as to deceive, if it were possible, the very  
 “ elect, Mat. xxiv. 24. Yet no one from thence  
 “ wou'd argue, that those *false Christs*, are true  
 “ ones; nor wou'd any one conclude, that a  
 “ Man came from God, notwithstanding any  
 “ miracles he might do, if he appealed to  
 “ scripture for that which is no where in it.

“ Besides, what notions of common mo-  
 “ rality must he have, who pretends to  
 “ come from God, and declares that *the scrip-*  
 “ *tures testify* of him, John v. 39. if the scrip-  
 “ tures do not testify of him? What honesty,  
 “ what truth, or sincerity, must he have, who  
 “ cou'd begin at MOSES and all the prophets, and  
 “ expound unto his disciples in all the scriptures,  
 “ the things concerning himself, Luke xxiv. 27.  
 “ if neither MOSES nor the prophets ever spoke  
 “ a word about him? The prophets therefore  
 “ must be consider'd, and the foundation  
 “ of christianity must be laid on them, or  
 “ else, to avoid one difficulty, we shall be  
 “ forced into such absurdities, as no man  
 “ can palliate, much less can extricate him-  
 “ self out of.”

\* Allix's  
 reflect. on  
 the books of  
 the new  
 testament,  
 p. 176, 177

|| Judg-  
 ment a-  
 gainst the  
 unit. p.  
 53.

Lastly, Dr. \* ALLIX tell us, that the design  
 of the four Evangelists, is to prove that JESUS the  
 Son of MARY is the promised Messiah; and that  
 in his birth, his life, his doctrine, his death, and  
 resurrection, we meet with all the characters which  
 the prophets attributed to the Messiah. And he  
 says, that || miracles were to move and dispose men to  
 the receiving the truth; but proofs and arguments,  
 from the old testament, were the proper means



to convince their hearers of the truth of it. And, I humbly conceive, should any one, in virtue of the passages cited from these learned men, attack them as maintaining, that the facts of the new testament were to be prov'd by prophecy, and not by testimony, as Mr. Green does you, for maintaining the same commonly receiv'd notions in divinity with them, he would justly pass for a person incapable of ever understanding matters of divinity, unless they would suppose him to have such a just insight and knowledge of mankind, as to know, that he may represent an adversary as he pleases, speak to one point when he should speak to another, and, indeed, say whatever he pleases, either against common sense or morality, with the applause of those, whose applause only it, perhaps, concerns him to obtain.

## II.

Mr. Green, in his second letter, proposes to prove against you, that \* *that it is reasonable* \* Letters, to receive that doctrine as divine, which is confirm'd p. 26. by miracles; that is, if he will oppose you, that it is reasonable to receive JESUS for the Messiah on account of the miracles wrought by him, without regard to any trial or proof of his Messiahship from the old testament. For I do not know, that you have asserted any thing in your discourse upon the head of miracles, as proofs of a divine authority, but what is said by all divines of learning and understanding, in the case. You assert, that they are not absolute proofs of a divine authority, as they all do; but advance nothing against their force, when consider'd as proofs or motives in

a lower sense: nay, you suppose, according to the common notion, that they are, in their nature, a † confirmation of a mission.

† *Discourse*  
*&c.* p. 42.

However, tho' Mr. Green does not really oppose you, and talks to a question of his own framing, [which I allow he may thro' mistake take to be the question, as well as invidiously make the question;] yet he having laid down the general proposition before mentioned, and attempted to prove it, we have a right to expect that proof from him, as, indeed, we have of every thing he pretends to advance against you; for indeed, nothing can be more improper, than to advance so many things without proofs, as he does, in *letters* to you, whom he supposes an infidel, and must suppose pay no regard, but that of contempt to him, for his mere assertions, as if you were one of his *old women*; for whose edification he seems only to write.

Accordingly I shall consider what he says: He proposes to prove his point by *easy steps* in *fifteen* propositions.

But his whole proof lies in his *eighth*,  
 \* *Letters*, which affirms, " \* that God may assure us, that  
 p. 28. " such a doctrine is a revelation from him  
 " by some *extraordinary works*, that is, *works*  
 " *contrary to, or beside the known and common laws,*  
 " *or course of nature and providence*; as for in-  
 " stance, the causing the Sun and the Moon  
 " to stand still in the midst of heaven, or  
 " making one day about as long as two, as  
 " *Josh. x. 13.* There is no absurdity in sup-  
 " posing that such *works* may be wrought;  
 " and for this end, the assuring men that such  
 " a doctrine is a revelation from God. And  
 " if his doing some extraordinary works is  
 " not

" not proper to answer this end, he does  
 " not see any thing that can be thought to  
 " be so."

To which I answer, that it is very true,  
*God may assure us that such a doctrine is a revelation from him, by extraordinary works, &c.* But then it must appear, by some reason, that the said extraordinary works are such assurances, or that that is their intent and design. For the possibility of God's assuring us of the truth of a doctrine by extraordinary works is no proof, that that is, or must be his method, in fact, of assuring us of the truth of any doctrine, and of communicating his will to us. That is the thing to be proved by reason, and not suppos'd; for, if we do not know by reason, that extraordinary works are proofs of a doctrine coming from God; we cannot know by reason that extraordinary works must be God's method of assuring us of the truth of a doctrine. Nothing therefore follows, from the allowance of this possibility to his purpose; and yet I cannot find that he offers at any further proof of his point, unless what he adds, is intended for a proof, that if God's doing extraordinary works is not proper to answer this end, he does not see any thing that can be thought to be so; which seems a strange proof: For, what if nothing else can be thought of by him, or any one else, proper to answer this end; does it therefore follow, that that is God's method of revealing his will? And, tho' he cannot see that any other method can be thought of, whereby God can give proof of revealing his will, yet I think others may see one. And indeed all the religious sects of the world contend, that God, not only may have, but has



has had, a constant communication with mankind, by what they call *internal revelation*, *experiences*, and *inspiration*; which is inward conviction of mind, and stronger than any traditional evidence for miracles can be, or any evidence of our senses for *miracles*, which yet, if proved to be done, we can neither know to be works of God, nor proofs of a doctrine coming from him. And it is surprizing to me, that the reverend Mr. GREEN, who must *openly* pretend he has had a *call from the holy ghost* to the ministry; who, one would think, should be perswaded, that *the holy spirit is the greatest witness to the truth of the christian religion*; and who is of a *sect* that deals in *experiences*, and talks much of the *witness*, or *testimony*, and *operations of the spirit*, should be so little affected with the said doctrine himself, as to imply, that such things are not so much as *thought of* by him, when he is talking to you of the methods, that God may take of *assuring us of the truth of a doctrine*; for I dare say he speaks [whatever he thinks] of it, in his pulpit, and upon other occasions. But whatever his real sense may be of *inspiration*, or of the *witness*, *testimony*, and *operation of the spirit*, and of *experiences*, I conceive that they may be much better proofs of God's *assuring us of the truth of a doctrine*, than *extraordinary works*: which, when considered as they stand in fact, were done in an obscure corner, [where there were numerous \* pretenders to perform such *extraordinary works*,] the report, and evidence whereof, reached but a little way: which do not render the persons who do them

\* Bishop of  
Litch-  
field's,  
&c. De-  
fence of  
Christ.  
p. 431.

them infallible; for \* JUDAS, and perhaps some, who had sometimes wrought miracles by Christ's commission, did afterwards renounce him, and apostatize from the faith; and their having been used by God as his instruments and messengers, did not authorize them for ever after to be accounted such, nor was to give them credit in all they said, or did: which have been reported and testify'd to be done in behalf of all religions; for as Dr. JENKIN observes, † *there never was any of the false religions, but it was pretended to have been confirmed by something miraculous: which can be done by beings inferior to God, and even by evil beings, or workers of iniquity [who can do such wonderful works, as would deceive, if possible, the very elect, that is, all but those, who by being elected, must necessarily persevere in grace to the end, and cannot possibly fall from grace, or be deceiv'd into an erroneous belief,] nay, by SATAN, or the Devil, who can transform himself into an angel of light: and which are proofs only of the power, but not of the veracity of their author. In justification of my assigning inspiration, as a way that God, if he pleases, may take to give proof of the truth of a doctrine's coming from him, give me leave to produce some authorities in behalf of my opinion; all which will be found, either to assert the method of inspiration, to be a better method for God to reveal his will, than the method by miracles, or extraordinary works, or to confound the method by miracles, or to assert the excellency and reality of inspiration, as a method taken by God to reveal his will.*

\* Fleetwood's  
Essay on  
Miracles,  
p. 111.

† Jenkin's  
reasonabl.  
of Christ,  
Vol. 1. p.  
28.

I find the following clauses, [both in the articles of christian religion, approv'd and pass'd by both houses of parliament, after advice had with the assembly of divines by authority of parliament sitting at Westminster, printed 1648; and in the declaration of the faith and order own'd and practis'd in the congregational churches in England, agreed upon and consented unto by the elders and messengers in their meeting at the Savoy, Oct. 12. 1658.]

“ The authority of the holy scripture, for which it ought to be believ'd and obey'd, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof; and therefore it is to be receiv'd, because it is the word of God.”

“ We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church, to an high and reverend esteem of the holy scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole, (which is, to give all glory to God,) the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the word of God; yet notwithstanding, our full perswasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the work of the holy spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts.”



The learned and acute Mr. BAXTER says,  
 \* he is much more apprehensive, than heretofore, of the necessity of well grounding men in their religion, and especially of the witness of the indwelling spirit: for he more SENSIBLY PERCEIVES, that the SPIRIT is the great WITNESS of CHRIST and christianity to the world.

\* Reliquiz Baxterianæ, p. 127.

The renown'd Dr. OWEN, a great divine of the independent sect, thus treats the argument for the truth of christianity, from miracles, in his considerations upon the *Biblia Polyglotta*, as I find him represented by Dr. WALTON, the editor of the *Biblia Polyglotta*, in the defence of that work, against the said considerations. Dr. WALTON † says, " He [that is " Dr. OWEN] rejects that main argument " to prove the scriptures to be from God, " p. 103, 104. viz. the miracles wrought by " MOSES and CHRIST, the prophets and apostles, to confirm their doctrine, brought " down to us by the undoubted testimony and " universal tradition of the church of CHRIST, " and sticks not to affirm, that the *Alcoran* " may vie miracles and traditions with the scripture, p. 105. And that there is no more reason " to believe those who have receiv'd that tradition, " and plead they have it, before and against them " who profess they have no such report deliver'd " them from their forefathers, p. 108. Nor have " we more inducement to give credit to their assertions, than to a like number of men holding out a " tradition utterly to the contrary, that is, why " we should believe the testimony of the " whole christian church, before the testimony " of Jews, Pagans, and Mahometans, to the " contrary."

† Walton's considerator consider'd, p. 22.

\* Vol. I.  
p. 180.

The ingenious author of \* *miscellanea sacra*, says, The comparifon between the ftate of prophecy under the old and new teftament, which he has made, to fhew wherein the fuperior teaching of the fpirit did confift; will alfo fhew, wherein the fuperiority of the witnefs of the fpirit, to all other teftimonies given to CHRIST, did confift. Our Saviour went about working miracles, curing difeafes, and cafting out devils: yet it might be faid by malice and perversenefs (perhaps by mere fcepti- cism, in fome given to doubt) that they did not know the power of nature, and therefore could not judge of a miracle; that they did not know what fecrets there might be for the speedy and instantaneous cure of difeafes; and that they could not tell, whether thofe few were really dead, that were faid to be raifed: And the blasphemy againft the fon, went fo far, as to fay, that he caft out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils: And, poffibly fome thought, that his cures of difeafes, as well as his difpoffeffing of devils, was by charms, and spells, and magical arts, ufed almoft univerfally in medicine in that age of the world. See ACTS xix. 18, 19. And as for working miracles, curing of difeafes, and cafting out devils, the heathen priefts and exorcifts pretended to them; and many among the Jews pretended to fome of them. And our Saviour, as well as his apoftles, foretold, that there fhould be falfe Chriffs, and falfe prophets; and that they fhould work fuch figns and wonders, as, if it were poffible, would feducethe very elect; and that Satan fhould come among thofe, who receiv'd not the truth in the love of it, with all power, figns, lying wonders, Matt. xxiv. 24. 2 Theff. ii. 8, 9, 10. Nay, even as to CHRIST'S refur- rection, a wicked imagination might perhaps ftain itfelf fo far, as to find out fome cavils and excep- tions

tions to it.----- But the witness of the spirit quite blunts and deadens all the working of the most active and sublimated malice : For is there any secret art, trick, slight, or power ; or was any such thing ever pretended to, since the world began ; by which the knowledge of things of the greatest compass, use, and consequence, can be infused into the minds of vast numbers of illiterate men and women in an instant, and the power given to some of them to communicate some of those gifts, but different ones to all those believers to whom they came without distinction ; by the laying on of their hands ? He adds, If all this illumination, in the several kinds and degrees in which it was communicated to vast multitudes, had nothing in it more than the miracles wrought by our Saviour and his apostles in his life-time, and was of the same rank and class with them : yet inasmuch as it was in many instances of it, and in the great numbers to which it was communicated, entirely new, (none of the prophets, JOHN the baptist, or the apostles in the life-time of our Saviour, having ever had it,) it was the more likely to produce much greater effects than any of the other.

Mr. Green, therefore, in asserting miracles to be the only method for God to manifest his will, rejects the doctrine of the witness of the spirit ; and in building christianity upon the proof of the miraculous facts contain'd in the gospel in particular, quits the notions of his great predecessor in the ministry, Dr. Owen ; who, as appears, argued against such proof, as equally conclusive for all religions, and made the great proof of the truth of christianity to lie in the self-evidencing power and light of the scriptures themselves, and of the witness of the in-dwelling spirit within every man.

But



\* Sher-  
lock's use,  
8<sup>th</sup> p. 55.

But tho' I take the way of *inspiration* to be better than the way of *extraordinary works*, and can think of no better; yet I would no more conclude, that that must be God's way, if he thought fit, (I say, if God *thought fit*, for I know not \* *upon what right we can demand to be told any thing*) to give proof of his revealing his will to mankind, than I would conclude from God's giving to every man *reason*, that there is no need of, nor can be, any other way for God to communicate his will to the world, and, in particular, would not even conclude, that it was absurd to suppose, that God had left us to learn his will among the infinite sorts of those, who pretend to be *ministers of his word*, and *embassadors* from him. On the contrary, I would give every sort of them a fair hearing, as to the proof of their mission or *embassy*, how unpromising soever their obvious figure, marks, livery, appearances, and pretences may be, of their being sent by the great God of heaven and earth.

† Letters,  
p. 29.

Mr. Green having, as appears, prov'd nothing, and having suppos'd the very thing he was to prove, proceeds to answer the † *only objection*, which, as he says, *lies against his last proposition*, viz. that there are other beings, besides God, superior unto us; and we cannot say what power they may have of doing the works we are speaking of; and, consequently, we can't tell, when they are the works of God, and when the works of these other beings.

How he answers his own *objection*, I shall now consider, and shew you, that he answers that *objection* in such a manner, as to evince, that miracles, or *extraordinary works*, are not a proof

proof of the divinity of a doctrine. And then I think nothing will appear less argumentative than his *propositions*; which pretend only to assert the *possibility* of their being such proof, and which *really* shew, that they cannot be proofs. In answer to the objection started by him, he allows, that *beings inferior to God, can do extraordinary works*. How then can we distinguish, when God acts, or does *extraordinary works*, and when *other beings* do them? He says, *God can give us a certain criterion*. But what is that *criterion*, consistently with allowing, that *beings inferior to God, can do miracles, or extraordinary works*?

I. First, he says, the *works themselves furnish us with this criterion*, when, in a contest between two parties doing miracles, one party makes it appear, that the power by which he was acted, was superior to that of the other. Thus, he says, in the contest between AARON and the magicians of Egypt before PHARAOH and his servants, both AARON and the Magicians chang'd their rods into serpents, turn'd the waters into blood, and brought up frogs on the land of Egypt. And so far they were on an equal foot. But at the next meeting, such things were done by AARON, that the magicians not being able to imitate them, it appear'd that the power by which AARON acted was superior to that of the magicians, and that such things were done by AARON, that the magicians themselves were forc'd to confess unto AARON, THIS IS THE FINGER OF GOD. In answer to which I say;

I. That, in the example produc'd, there is no *criterion* laid down by Mr. Green to judge, when an *extraordinary work* is done by God, and when not, but only in the case of

a contest between two parties working miracles for victory. And we are left exposed to receive all the numerous attested miracles, wrought among the *Pagans*, when there were no contests: for it appears, from the affair before us, that the *magicians* not only could and did do miracles, but that they were accustom'd to do them, by their free and confident entering into a contest of miracles with AARON at the command of PHARAOH.

2. This victory of AARON over the *magicians*, does no more furnish us with a criterion to judge from the *works themselves*, that God acted by AARON, than if either AARON or the *magicians* had singly, or without a contest for superiority, wrought miracles.

For if *beings inferior to God* can do miracles, as Mr. *Green* supposes, how can any body tell, from the miracles themselves, in a contest between two parties, one whereof continues to do miracles, after the other ceases, and is unable to do more, but that it is a contest between *inferior beings*, superior to one another in power?

3. There can be no proof, that an extraordinary work is a work of God, from the work itself, but a proof, that no other being can do that work, besides God. \* Nor can any use be made of miracles, if any one but God cou'd work them—— They cou'd not manifest a divine power if any less cou'd work them; nor could they attest to any ones being sent of God, if any other than God could exercise such power, because they might proceed from one as well as the other. You could not know I came from, and was sent by such

\* Fleet-  
wood, ib.  
p. 11.



*such a prince, by my bringing his seal along with me, if other people had the same seal, and would lend it to others to use it as they saw fit.*

II. Mr. Green offers you a second criterion, whereby we may know, when extraordinary works are the works of God. And that is contained in these words: \* *That extraordinary* \* Letters, p. 33.  
*works, wrought to assure us, that such a doctrine is a revelation from God, are to be look'd upon as the works of God; or, which is the same thing in effect, as done by a divine power, when the doctrine they are wrought for the confirmation of, has a natural tendency to make men holy and happy.*

To which I answer :

1. First, How does such criterion shew any extraordinary works, to be works of God, when such works may be wrought by inferior beings? Is there any contradiction in supposing, that inferior beings may propose doctrines, which interested men will assert, to have a tendency to make men holy and happy, and by all arts and sophistry maintain and defend, [as the papists do their doctrines and practices, which have the greatest tendency imaginable to make men wicked and miserable,] or even may propose doctrines, some of which, nay all, may have that real tendency?

2. Secondly, That if extraordinary works or miracles are then only to be look'd on, as the works of God, when the doctrine they are wrought for the confirmation of, has a tendency to make men holy and happy, then miracles, as such, do not evince themselves to be the works of God, and are no proofs of a divine revelation. † *Mere miracles will signify nothing, nor determine me one way or another.* And the making a doctrine [which, as tending to make

† Fleet-wood, Ibid. p. 172.

\* See  
Fleet-  
wood,  
Ib. p. 170.

*men holy and happy*, carries its own proof along with it] a *criterion*, whereby to judge, that an *extraordinary work*, is a *work of God*; and a proof of a doctrine's coming from him, is to make \* the doctrine prove the miracle, and not the miracle prove the doctrine, and to make the miracle wholly needless. For if men know, that a miracle is wrought to confirm a doctrine that has a tendency to make *men holy and happy*, they know the doctrine has that tendency, and have a demonstrative proof of the truth and divine authority of that doctrine, and need no other proof, and especially not such a proof, as an *extraordinary work*, which may be done by a being inferior to God, and which has no force in itself to prove a doctrine's coming from God, but what it derives from that doctrine itself, already demonstrated to be true.

Besides, the rule, of making miracles then a proof of a doctrine's coming from God, when the doctrines themselves have a tendency to make *men holy and happy*, cannot be applied in the case of *judaism and christianity*; both which, as consisting in many respects of merely positive doctrines [some of which have † objections,

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† The reverend Mr. Thomas Bradbury, a brother divine to Mr. Green, and who may be supposed in representing christianity, to talk orthodoxly, or according to the notions of the divines of his sect, says [in his *nature of faith*. p. 6, 7.] There are four things, that may be call'd the chief practice of the christians faith. 1. Their obedience to those commands, that reason could not comply with. 2. Their dependance upon those promises, that reason could not subscribe to. 3. Their continual regard to Jesus Christ, who to reason is a stone of stumbling. And, 4. Their great repose of soul upon heaven and immortality, which to reason is all enthusiasm.

jections, as for example, the doctrine of the *Trinity*, against them in point of reason, which the advocates for them say, cannot be answered,] cannot come under that rule: to say nothing of such matters, as God's command to ABRAHAM to sacrifice his son; the \* precept in relation to human sacrifices, exemplify'd in particular by the sacrifice of JEPHTHA's daughter; God's directing the *Israelites* to borrow the jewels of the *Egyptians*, that they might detain them for their own use; the approbation of JAEEL killing SISERA in his sleep, not only contrary to that peace which was between king JABIN [whose general SISERA was] and the house of HEBER [whose wife JAEEL was,] but contrary to the laws of protection, and to her own plighted faith; for she went out to meet him, and invited him into her house, saying, *turn in my lord, turn in to me, fear not*, and SISERA in confidence of what she said put himself under her protection; God's sending SAMUEL to anoint DAVID at *Bethlehem*, and, to prevent king SAUL's jealousy of the intent to dethrone him, bidding him say, he went thither to sacrifice; the practice of mens selling their whole estate and substance, and bringing all things in common; the forbidding *usury*; the approbation of *eunuchism* as the way to the kingdom of God; the discouragement of marriage, and recommending the state of virginity and single life; and divers other such matters, too long to be enumerated here.

I conclude this subject of *miracles* with the observations of a late most ingenious \* author. He says, *Perhaps, it may be said, that miracles are a sufficient evidence and criterion of a revelation*

\* *Lev. xxix*  
28, 29.

|| Morgan's *Pre-  
face to  
Tracts,*



from God.— But I would fain know, what miracles there are, which may not be wrought by the power of some invisible evil spirits, or malicious and wicked agents, at least, as to appearance, and so as to impose on the spectators, beyond their capacity of detecting the cheat; and which must then have, to all intents and purposes, the same effect upon them, as if the miracles were true and real? If it be urged here, that as God himself cannot confirm any false doctrines by miracles, so it must be inconsistent with his wisdom, truth, and goodness, to suffer others to confirm any such doctrines by false and pretended miracles, and thereby impose upon mankind in a matter of such high consequence, as their eternal salvation: it is easy to reply, that this is arguing against fact and experience; for that a very considerable, and perhaps the far greater part of mankind always have been, and still are, thus imposed on, by the pretended miracles of wicked priests, and the lying wonders of Satan, is evident in fact: and therefore to maintain, that this cannot be done, or ought not to be suffer'd, is not to prove the truth of doctrines by miracles, but to impeach providence, and deny the perfections of God. But the truth is, that the people in popish countries, or wherever miracles are in vogue, are not to blame for not detecting the cheats of juggling priests and designing knaves, who impose on their senses; for this, perhaps, is what they cannot do; the plot may be too close and deep, and the design too nice and knavish for them. But what they are really to blame for, is, their receiving doctrines as true and divine, upon the bare attestation of miracles, as a full and sufficient proof, without regard to the nature and intrinsic character of the doctrines themselves. By this means, they are often led into schemes of religion, which, in their whole

whole frame and contrivance, discover the evident marks and signatures of superstition and enthusiasm, or of knavery and imposture; and which therefore could not be reasonably received, as coming from God, even though all the miracles done from the beginning of the world had been wrought to confirm them. He concludes with a most just remark, that if any doctrines are receiv'd in virtue of miracles, as coming from God, which doctrines are not characteris'd by the reason of things, and the moral fitness of actions, 'tis plain, there can be no possible guard against enthusiasm and imposture, nor any criterion by which we may distinguish between truth and falsehood, or right and wrong, in matters of religion.

## III.

I proceed to the grand question, Whether there are any prophecies cited out of the old in the new testament, literally or only typically accomplish'd: I say the grand question; as it is the question started or begun by you; as it is a question of the utmost importance; and as it is a question, that is the foundation of all other questions in theology, and in respect of which all other questions, which you have started are but incidents.

Mr. Green begins his proof of literal prophecies, by asserting, \* *that if the truth of a proposition be fully prov'd, we are obliged to believe it, tho' we cannot answer every objection that is brought against it by a learned and subtle adversary. For this we may be sure of, that truth is not contrary to truth; and that there must be some way or other of answering objections against the truth, tho' in many instances, thro' the weakness of our minds, and our imperfect views* of

\* Letters, p. 57.

of things, we may not be so happy as to find it out. Supposing therefore, adds he, that I should not be able to answer your objection against christianity, taken from the typical, or allegorical proof of it; that is, the proof of it from passages in the old testament, which are applied to JESUS, or matters relating to him in the new testament, and which you think, in their literal, obvious, and primary sense, had no relation at all to these things; yet, since, as has been shewn, the miracles wrought by JESUS, his resurrection from the dead, and the wonderful things done by the apostles in confirmation of christianity, fully prove, that is the doctrine of God, I should think myself bound to receive it as such; and thus I must think, as long as the above-mentioned arguments to prove it abide in their full strength, and all attempts to shew their weakness are vain.

To which I answer,

I. That if there can be such a thing as a proposition prov'd, that may be liable to an objection [I leave out, brought against it by a learned and subtle adversary, as a thing wholly impertinent. For wou'd it, for example, alter the nature of Mr. Green's objections to what you think prov'd, to say, they were brought by a learned and subtle adversary? Does learning and subtlety in an objector, make his objections bad? or want of learning and subtlety make his objections good?] that cannot be answered, there is then a demonstration of both sides, and thorough scepticism introduc'd. There would then be no more reason, to suppose the truth lay in the proposition prov'd, than in the unanswerable objection; and consequently there would be no reason for any assent at all.

II.



II. Secondly, there can be no such thing, as a proposition *prov'd*, to which an *unanswerable objection* lies; nor can there be an *unanswerable objection* to a proposition, that does not destroy that proposition.

III. All defenders of truth are not only obliged to produce arguments for their opinions, but to shew their consistency with other truths, by *answering all objections*: and if once men own, they *cannot answer objections* to their opinions, they implicitly give up their opinions. It argues the utmost weakness of a cause, for its advocates to say, that they *cannot answer* their adversaries *objections*.

IV. But, fourthly, the *case*, for the sake of which this notion, which is so absurd and sceptical, and betrays the cause it is design'd to advance; the *case*, I say, will, when consider'd, clearly determine the point against him. For the matters suppos'd to be *prov'd*, or *fully prov'd*, are, that they, who do *miracles*, *fully prove* the *truth* of the *doctrines* they deliver; and particularly, that they do by their *miracles prove*, that they must *interpret* the old testament according to its *literal sense*. Now the *objection*, which is suppos'd to be *unanswerable*, is, that the words of the old testament, cited in the new, have visibly not that meaning, [literally,] which the apostles ascribe to them. Now, in this *case*, the *objection* destroys the *full proof*. For the *full proof*, first, wholly depends on a matter that is but merely probable, which is, that the apostles intended to apply the passages they cite out of the old testament, in their *literal sense*: for it is affirm'd by all divines,

vines, that the apostles do not always intend to apply all the passages they cite in their *literal sense*; and by most divines, that the *prophecy* of the *Virgin*, which is the particular *prophecy* in question, was not intended to be literally applied by St. MATTHEW: and, secondly, the *full proof* it self consists only of probable *mediums*, such as, the *proof* of *extraordinary facts* done, and that those *extraordinary facts* done are *proofs* of the *truth* of a *doctrines*, and particularly *proof*, that the doers of them must interpret the old testament according to its *literal sense*, when they cite and argue from it.

But the *objection*, which consists in setting forth the *literal sense* of the old testament in such manner as is allow'd to be *unanswerable*, is a *demonstration*, and ought to carry it against the several precarious and probable matters which are implied in, and make up the *full proof*; and consequently, the suppos'd *full proof*, is *no proof* at all.

However, after this preliminary, which Mr. Green thinks sufficient of it self to confute you, and to prove the true *literal sense* of the *prophecies*, cited out of the old in the new testament, he proceeds to the consideration of those *five* produced by you; and begins with the famous one of ISAIAH, of the *Virgin's conceiving*, cited in the first chapter of St. MATTHEW, which he endeavours to shew does not concern a *virgin* or *young woman* in the time of AHAZ, but concerns the *Virgin MARY's conception* of JESUS CHRIST, and is so apply'd by St. MATTHEW. This *prophecy*, I shall therefore here consider, by making certain observations,

tions, on what he says, which will confirm the interpretation given by you of that prophecy, which is the most common interpretation, and particularly the interpretation of the great GROTIUS, and destroy that given by Mr. Green. I will only observe, that Mr. Green pretends, in his *exposition* of the said prophecy, to \* walk in an *unbeaten path*: \* *Letters*, which is, I think, a concession to the force of *p. 84.* your *objection*; shews the streights to which he must think the cause reduces him; and shews his *exposition* cannot be just; which, if it had been a probable or possible one, could not have escap'd the interpreters for so many centuries, who, it is known, have on this, as well as on all other occasions, us'd all the shifts which wit, learning, and penetration, could furnish them with, or that zeal and ignorance could tempt them to use. He adds, that if his *sense of the place should have such objections raised against it, as he may not be able to answer, some other sense may be found out to justify St. Matthew's application of this prophecy.* This implies a distrust, at least, of his own explication, if it does not imply guilt in proposing it. It also implies him to be a mere advocate, and to make use of any shifts, without regard to the evidence of things for 1700 years past, to suppose a *sense* may yet be found out to serve his purpose: and it makes his adversaries in possession of *seeming truth*, as things have always stood, and stand at present.

I. He begins with urging the † *authority of † Letters*, St. MATTHEW, whose *interpretation*, he says, *p. 53.* is contrary to yours.

F

I. But,



\* Letters,  
p. 82.

1. But, first, he ought to know; that GROTIUS, HAMMOND, and the generality of interpreters understand, as you do, St. MATTHEW to apply this prophecy typically; that other learned men of late suppose, that St. MATTHEW only *accommodates* the words of ISAIAH to his purpose; and that he himself confounds all manner of certainty in respect to St. MATTHEW's intention of a literal interpretation of ISAIAH, as prophesying of the birth of the *Messiah*, by an observation he makes elsewhere, when he says, \* *The question is, what is meant by being fulfill'd? we talk its true of fulfilling prophecies: but may not other things, other words, other passages of the old testament be said to be fulfill'd, besides the prophecies or predictions of future events?* For by thus supposing the words, *that it might be fulfilled*, [us'd in St. MATTHEW on the citing of ISAIAH] have no relation to a prophecy, he subverts the common sense of a phrase, which alone or chiefly determines St. MATTHEW to intend the accomplishment of a prophecy. He therefore begs the question, in supposing the *authority* of St. MATTHEW against you, and might as well urge his *authority* against those divines, who interpret St. MATTHEW differently from him, as you do: and he seems to begin, after this manner, merely to throw St. MATTHEW at you; who may just in the same manner be thrown at him. For I might urge the *authority* of St. MATTHEW's application of the said passage of ISAIAH [either in the way of *type* or *accommodation*] as of weight against his *exposition*, or his *walk* in an *unbeaten path*.

2. But,

2. But, secondly, what is St. MATTHEW's *authority* to the point in dispute, according to his way of arguing with you? He supposes your design was to shew, that the apostles application of the prophecies of the old testament was not just and pertinent, and that that is your meaning, when you assert their applications of prophecies not to be according to the literal sense they bear in their places in the old testament. To what purpose then is it to quote St. MATTHEW's *authority* against you, when according to you, as he thinks fit to understand you, your objection or notion supposes St. MATTHEW to be against you? Wherein lies the force of an *authority* of one, against you, when your design is to attack or confute the person whose *authority* he cites?

II. He says, that King AHAZ \* *refusing the gracious offer of a sign* from ISAIAH, [to convince him, that he the said ISAIAH came with a message from the Lord to assure him, that the Kings of Syria and Israel, who had invaded Judea, and struck AHAZ and his people with the utmost consternation, should not succeed in their design,] he *sees no reason to think that any sign was intended to be given to AHAZ.* \* Letters, p. 62.

But methinks the express assurance in the text that ISAIAH did give AHAZ a *sign*, should be a sufficient proof, that he did so, tho' Mr. Green can see no reason for it. For the text expressly says upon AHAZ's refusing a *sign*, *The Lord shall give you a sign, Behold a virgin shall conceive, &c.*

But he endeavours at a *reason*, to shew, that no sign was given AHAZ. This reason had need be a very plain and good one; when the text says, *the Lord shall give you a sign*; when the text names the *sign*, *Behold a virgin*, &c. which was to be a *sign* of the accomplishment of the matter promis'd by the prophet; and when that sign is afterwards related as actually preceding the said accomplishment. And this *reason* ought to arise from the context, which, as it seems, is as express and plain, that God did give AHAZ a *sign*, as is possible. But, instead of this, he argues against the matter expressly asserted by ISAIAH, by saying, he can see no reason to think, that a *sign* was intended to be given to AHAZ; 1. Because he cannot see, that such a *sign* was likely to have answer'd any good end: for there was no encouragement to hope, that

\*p. 63, 70. AHAZ (who was a \*thorough-pac'd Unbeliever) would have turn'd his eyes to any sign that might have been given him; or have spent one thought about it. 2. Because if God had been resolv'd, however AHAZ carried it, to have given him a sign to assure him, that his enemies should not prevail against him, he would have done it at the first. And it seems such an odd method of proceeding, first, to make the person the offer of a thing, and then after he, from a vile principle, has refus'd it, to force it upon him, that he cannot think the Wise God acted in this manner in the case before us.

These reasons, I think, need no answer, as being grounded on these suppositions; that Mr. Green is fully acquainted with the will of God, and his intentions; and that his conceptions in a matter, about which he cannot



cannot but be much in the dark, must be the rule of God's doing or forbearing an action, and this against an express assurance, that God did do so.

This way of interpretation lays the bible open to all the contradictory and foolish meanings, which ignorant, weak, enthusiastick, or designing men can, from their weak schemes of things, put upon it. And I do not see, that Mr. *Green* makes any other use of the bible, but under the mere pretence of its authority, to vent his own whimsies, and make them, and not the context, the rule of interpretation, and that in opposition to the most express and plain meaning thereof. I enter not into a vindication of God's conduct, in promising and giving a *sign* to AHAZ upon AHAZ's refusing a *sign*, against Mr. *Green*'s attacks upon it, as odd and *unbecoming* his *wisdom*. No intelligent reader can want that from the circumstances arising from the matter, as related in ISAIAH, nor from an hundred suppositions, which every intelligent man may make in favour of what God is actually said to do, nor from that modesty and humility, which every man has in proportion to his knowledge. It is sufficient to say, that the manifest sense of the text, however odd to Mr. *Green*, is against him, and that his reasoning to fix his sense on the text is wholly remote and impertinent in the case.

His *third reason* is an argument taken from the context. "It is certain, *says he*, \* that \* Letters, 65.  
 "the judgments that are threaten'd in the  
 "same breath with which this prophecy is  
 "deliver'd, plainly shew, that God then  
 "had

“ had no design to comfort *AHAZ and his*  
 “ *people*, in assuring them by a sign, that the  
 “ projects of their enemies should in a lit-  
 “ tle time be confounded. They are indeed  
 “ assur’d of this, but as there is no sign to  
 “ gain credit to the assurance of it; so if  
 “ you do not interpret the prophecy we  
 “ are considering in the sense in which  
 “ St. MATTHEW understood it,” [that is ac-  
 “ cording to Mr. *Green*, as literally relating  
 “ to the virgin MARY’s conception of the *Mes-*  
 “ *siah*,] “ this assurance could do nothing at  
 “ all for their comfort.” He adds, “ It is  
 “ said indeed, *before the child*, (the prophet  
 “ pointing we may think to SHEARJASHUB  
 “ in his hand) *shall know to refuse the evil*  
 “ *and chuse the good, the land shall be forsaken*  
 “ *of both her kings*. But what comfort could  
 “ this be to AHAZ and his people, (unless  
 “ the passage under our consideration has  
 “ another sense, than that you put upon it,)  
 “ when the next words are, *The Lord shall*  
 “ *bring upon thee and thy father’s house, days, that*  
 “ *have not come, from the day that Ephraim*  
 “ *departed from Judah, even the king of As-*  
 “ *syria!* And when in the rest of the chap-  
 “ ter a depopulating of their country is re-  
 “ presented as a consequence of this.”

In answer to these suggestions, which have  
 not the colour of argument, and are nothing  
 but assertions against fact, I observe, that  
 God had a design to comfort *AHAZ and his*  
*people*, who were under the greatest conster-  
 nation on the invasion of the kings of Syria  
 and Israel, and particularly by a sign to as-  
 sure them that the design of the two kings  
 should come to nothing.

For,

For, upon the invasion of the kings of Syria and Israel, the \* prophet was sent by \* Isa. vii. God, and order'd to take SHEARJASHUB his Son with him to AHAZ, whose heart was mov'd at it, as well as the hearts of his people, as the trees of the wood are mov'd with the wind, and say unto him, fear not, neither be faint-hearted, for the design of these kings shall not stand, nor shall it come to pass. But Ahaz not giving credit to the prophet, the prophet speaks again to Ahaz saying, Ask me a sign, to shew that I come to you from God with a Message of comfort. And upon AHAZ's refusing a sign, the prophet says, [tho' you refuse a sign,] The Lord shall give you a sign, Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name IMMANUEL. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and chuse the good. For before the child, that is, the child to be born, shall know to refuse the evil and chuse the good, the land shall be forsaken of both her kings. And this plain account is further confirm'd in Isaiah, as it was also by the event. For the prophet † took faithful witnesses, and went unto the † Isa. viii. prophetess, [a young woman, or Virgin, whom he took to wife on this occasion,] and she conceived and bare a son, who by the order of God was also to be call'd MAHER-SHALAL-HASH-AZ. For before the child shall have knowledge to cry My Father and My Mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria. Which is exactly of the same import with the promise above cited, that before the child know to refuse the evil and chuse the good, the land, viz. of Syria and Israel, shall be forsaken of both her kings.



*kings.* So that it is manifest; that God had a design to comfort *AHAZ* and *his people*; that he *assured* them the design of the two kings should not succeed, (which of it self was comfort,) that he did give them a *sign* thereof, *viz.* a *young woman's conceiving a son*; that that *sign*, as being immediate and present, and a visible *sign*, was suited to the present occasion of their fears; that the event as related in *ISAIAH* confirms this matter; that the event of the *Messiah*, a matter to happen seven or eight hundred years after, has no relation to their present fears; [to say nothing here, that it does not in the least appear from *ISAIAH*, or from any of the books of the prophets, that the Jews had at this time any notion of a *Messiah*] and that the *child*, who was to *refuse the evil and chuse the good*, before the land was to be forsaken of both her kings, was not, and could not be *SHEARJASHUB*; who, first, does not appear to accompany his father on this occasion, and who, if he did accompany his father, is excluded, from being the *child* meant, in the plainest manner. For the words of the prophet are, *Behold a virgin shall conceive and bare a son, and before the child*, [that is, the *child* to be born of the *virgin*, according to the immediate preceding relative, there being not the least ground to correct the prophet *ISAIAH*'s grammar and context by a mere imaginary supposition of *ISAIAH*'s leaving so important a matter, as the *pointing* to *SHEARJASHUB*, to be found out by conjecture, in opposition to the plain grammatical sense, and that a supposition, of such a nature, as if allow'd and applied, whenever  
men

men have purposes to serve, will confound the sense of any book whatsoever,] *shall know to refuse the evil and chuse the good, the land shall be forsaken of both her kings.* Nor does the threat contained in the words immediately following the affair of the promise of a *conception of the virgin* and the assurance of the unsuccessful designs of the two kings, at all contradict the *comfort* promised in the matter of the two kings, which was that which then *mov'd the heart of AHAZ, and the hearts of his people, as the trees of the wood were moved with the wind.* It is very consistent, for God to give men *comfort*, as to one particular evil, about which they have present apprehensions, and yet to threaten them with another evil: and Mr. *Green's* suppos'd contradiction seems a most slight observation to set aside the plain and obvious sense of the prophet. Mr. GREEN adds to support what he has said, "that \* it may cast \* *Letters,*  
 " some further light upon this prophecy, as p. 69.  
 " well as confirm, what he has above observ'd,  
 " to add, that if God meant to have given  
 " AHAZ and his people a *sign* for their *comfort*,  
 " and to assure them that their enemies should  
 " in a little time be confounded, a virgin's  
 " [or a young woman's] *conceiving and bearing*  
 " a son, would by no means answer his end;  
 " because there was nothing extraordinary in  
 " it. For what miracle is this, a young wo-  
 " man's *conceiving and bearing a son* in the na-  
 " tural way? *Marvellous*, adds he, in the way  
 " of ridicule, is this work, the *conception and*  
 " *bearing a child!*" And he observes, that this  
 is a matter, wherein men may † *guess* right. † *Ib. p.*  
 To which it is sufficient to say, that this is argu- 71.  
 ing against, and ridiculing the express word

of God, and that also by falsifying it, when he says, *Marvellous is this work, the conception and bearing a CHILD!* when the word of God says a son; and that it would have been more just in it self, and more becoming a regard to the bible, to take the fact, as there related, and to observe upon it, that no one could tell with certainty, except miraculously, first, that a young woman or virgin should in a short time conceive a child; and secondly, that that child should be a male, and live a certain time. The text of the bible is to be taken, as we find it, and to be accounted for as it is, when there is no various reading, or pretence for corruption or interpolation. Otherwise, we make a mere nose of wax of it, and subject it to our whimsies, ignorance, enthusiasms, and interest.

\*Letters,  
p. 72.

He adds, by way of further attack on this suppos'd sign, that it was \* *not suited to the circumstances, that AHAZ and his people were in, whose fears and distress were present and immediate: and he attacks it for its impropriety, as you do the interpretation of it, as a sign to happen eight hundred years after. As if a sign given to fall out, within a year's time, of relief to happen soon after to the people, to whom the sign was given, was not suited to the present circumstances of those people! and as if such a sign was to be parallell'd with a sign, which has no relation to the present distress, and is not to take effect till eight hundred years after the generation, to whom it was given, is dead!*

III. Mr. Green having, as he thinks, prov'd that the prophecy cannot relate to a young woman in the days of AHAZ, proceeds upon that foundation  
in



in the next place, to shew, that it relates to the \* *virgin MARY and the birth of JESUS.*

\* *Ibid. p.*

That foundation I have destroyed already, 77.  
by shewing, that it wholly consists in interpreting away the plain text, by mere chimeras, all inconsistent with the express letter thereof. I have therefore nothing to do, but to consider merely the additional arguments here, which he urges to shew it relates to the *virgin MARY and the birth of JESUS.*

He † says, “ every circumstance, apply’d † *Ibid. p.*  
“ by St. MATTHEW, agrees with the pro- 77.  
“ phesy. For MARY was a pure virgin, † *knew* † *Mat. i.*  
“ not a man; and the only person we KNOW 18.  
“ of, who conceiv’d in such circumstances. Luke i.  
“ And as JESUS only was born of a virgin, so 34.  
“ he ALONE could properly be call’d IMMA-  
“ NUEL, God *with us.* And of him ONLY  
“ it could strictly be said, || *the government shall* || *Isa. ix.*  
“ be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be call’d 6, 7.  
“ *Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Ever-*  
“ *lasting Father, The Prince of Peace, of the increase*  
“ *of his government and peace there shall be no end*  
“ *&c.* which are things evidently too high for  
“ MAHER-SHALAL-HAS-BAS, HEZEKIAH,  
“ or any other person in that age.”

These are all the *circumstances* he urges to prove, that *every circumstance literally agrees with the prophecy.* Whereas, he should have produc’d the whole prophecy, and shew’d the *literal agreement in every circumstance.* But as the whole prophecy disagrees *literally* in every circumstance, so he enters not into a just and proper comparison, and confines himself to what seems to have a shadow of *literal agreement*, I say, to what seems to have a shadow of *literal*

agreement, for the circumstances he produces have no real literal agreement.

I. For MARY's being a *pure virgin*, and conceiving in those circumstances, has no literal agreement with ISAIAH, who speaks only of a young woman, [as appears both by the context in ISAIAH, and by the use of the original word, *Almah*, throughout the old testament] who is to conceive, and that without the least intimation of any miraculous or even remote conception, but on the contrary who was immediately to conceive in order to be a sign to AHAZ and his people, and who did, naturally conceive a son, as it is related in ISAIAH. And the miracle itself of a *pure virgin's* conceiving is well known (tho' Mr. GREEN professes to know nothing of the matter) to have been very frequent; as is shewn by the learned \* HUETIUS, who gives divers Instances thereof, among the pagans, to make it credible, that the virgin Mary might conceive without the intervention of man.

\* Huetii  
Alnetanzæ  
Qæst.  
l. 11. c. xv.

† Simon,  
Hist. Crit.  
du Nou  
Test. p. 247.  
† More's  
Mystery of  
Godliness.  
p. 328,  
329.  
|| Sher-  
lock's Use,  
&c. p. 31.

Let me add, that the Jews, [tho' they never pretended to found their doctrine † of a Messiah on a literal, but only on the allegorical sense of the old testament] never † so much as referred this passage of ISAIAH, to the Messiah. And Dr. SHERLOCK's || observation seems perfectly just, when he says, "that probably the prophecy, a virgin shall conceive a son, was not understood by the antient Jews as importing a miraculous conception; and that common sense led every man to understand it in a sense agreeable to nature and experience."

Let me add also an observation for you, against other adversaries, that a *pure virgin's* con-

con-

*conceiving*, could of it self be no *sign* at all to the *Jews*, because no body can tell but the *virgin* her self, whether she conceives miraculously, or no. And therefore the *sign* in ISAIAH must lie in the conception of a *young woman* or *virgin* naturally, which is a visible, manifest, sensible *sign*, and not in the conception of a *pure virgin* which, being an *invisible sign*, is no *sign* at all.

2. As to his assertion, that JESUS alone could properly be called IMMANUEL, *God with us*, I answer that JESUS cou'd not alone be properly call'd IMMANUEL; because that name was given by God to ISAIAH's son; to whom \*GROTIUS observes it was applicable by his being *God's sign* in *Isa.* to the *Jews* of his assistance to them in their distress. And if it signify'd in ISAIAH, only, [that is properly] a *sign of God's assistance*, it did not signify properly, only the birth and presence of God himself; whom the *Jews* never suspected was to be born of a woman, and could not therefore think to be properly signify'd by the word IMMANUEL in that place. It is the common *Jewish* way of speech to give *divine names* to things, and places on account of things done or to be done. \* Grotius  
vii. 14.

3. As to the third *circumstance* founded on the *agreement* of JESUS with the character given of a person in another place of ISAIAH, what is that to the prophecy before us? How does an *agreement* to another place in ISAIAH shew an *agreement* here? There is not one word in the context, where the said passage stands, to refer it to the *child* of the *young woman* in the prophecy before us. And it is therefore needless to make a just translation of the passage here, and shew that it relates to HEZECHIAH, especially after the performances of GROTIUS, and our most ingenious commentator WHITE. Under



Under this head of shewing an *agreement* between MARY's *conception* in MATTHEW, and the *birth of a son* in ISAIAH, he makes an objection to himself from the prophecy in these words: "*There is*, says he, one "*difficulty* in my exposition, which I must "*account for*: *It is expressly said the Lord himself shall give you a sign*; and *what was this sign, if not the virgin's conception and bearing a son?* for it immediately follows, Behold a virgin shall conceive, &c. and of *what could this be a sign, if not of the confounding the enemies of Judah?* Yet how could a virgin's conception and bearing a son, above seven hundred years after be any sign to the Jews, who lived in "*the time of AHAZ.*"

This, which he calls a *difficulty*, is the manifest sense of the place, and utterly subverts his pretended sense thereof: and nothing can be more absurd than his conduct, first, to coin a sense of ISAIAH, founded on chimeras and inconsistencies with ISAIAH, and, then to consider the real, manifest, and obvious sense only as a mere *difficulty*; which as he has taught us, in the beginning of this article, has no weight, though it *cannot be answered*, in opposition to what is *fully proved*, as he will suppose every thing to be, which he advances, how weak however it be. This is a most noble circle of disputation, and the weak scheme, into which the desperateness of their cause has reduced him and some others, who see but little before them.

But let us consider how he gets rid of the *difficulty*, and how he shews, that the manifest sense of the place contain'd in the said *difficulty* is not the sense of the place. He says

says, " We may consider the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth verses [ *Therefore the Lord himself shall give a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and she shall call his name IMMANUEL; butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and chuse the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and chuse the good, the land that thou abhorrest, shall be forsaken of both her kings* ] as containing two distinct predictions, *First*, That a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, &c. *Secondly*, That the land of the enemies of Judah should be forsaken of her kings, before SHEARJASHUB should know to refuse the evil, and chuse the good; and one of these predictions is certainly made a sign of the other, and was to be fulfilled in token, that the other should also come to pass in its season. Now, the question is, which of these predictions is the sign of the accomplishment of the other. You suppose that the virgin's conceiving and bearing a son is the sign of the land's being forsaken of both her kings within such a time; but since I have evidently shewn the absurdity of this supposition, I may reasonably conclude, that that which you look upon as the *sign* is in reality the *prediction* to be confirm'd by the sign; and that God, by the prophet, does here assure the house of \* DAVID, \*v. 13. that a virgin should conceive and bear a son, who should be an IMMANUEL, GOD with us, the *promised Messiah*: And since many among them were staggering through unbelief at the promise of God, that the

" *Messiah*

“ *Messiah should be born to the house of DA-*  
 “ *VID, then in such melancholy circum-*  
 “ *stances; and since this was a matter they*  
 “ *had never heard of before, and yet more*  
 “ *incredible, that he should be born of a virgin,*  
 “ *God kindly tells them, that this should be*  
 “ *the sign of his making good this gracious*  
 “ *promise, or glorious prophecy, the land of*  
 “ *their enemies should be forsaken of both her*  
 “ *kings before SHEARJASHUB, to whom we*  
 “ *may suppose the prophet pointed, should*  
 “ *know to refuse the evil, and chuse the good,*  
 “ *though he should eat butter and honey, (have*  
 “ *plenty of food suitable to men of his age)*  
 “ *that he might be in a capacity of doing it as soon*  
 “ *as possible. And thus we have a sign, ac-*  
 “ *cording to your desire, soon coming to pass,*  
 “ *of a thing to be performed above seven*  
 “ *hundred years to come.”*

In answer to those parts of this not before considered, I say,

1. That instead of answering the difficulty,  
 he does nothing, but endeavour to confound  
 the order of the sense and words of ISAIAH.  
 The difficulty is, “ *It is expressly said, the Lord*  
 “ *himself shall give a sign; and what was this*  
 “ *sign, if not the virgin’s conceiving and bearing*  
 “ *a son? for immediately follows, Behold a vir-*  
 “ *gin shall conceive, &c. and of what could*  
 “ *this be a sign, if not of the confounding the*  
 “ *enemies of Judah? yet how could a virgin’s*  
 “ *conceiving and bearing a son, above seven hun-*  
 “ *dred years after be any sign to the Jews, who lived*  
 “ *in the time of AHAZ?”*

And he answers by saying, That the sign  
 is not the conception of the virgin, but the  
 destruction of the design of the two kings,  
 which



which was to be a sign of the virgin's conception seven hundred years after. Wherein he *expressly* affirms the contrary to what is *expressly* said by ISAIAH; who, pursuant to the design of his commission, which was to assure AHAZ by a *sign*, that his enemies should not succeed against him, makes the *virgin's* conception to be the *sign* of his success against the two kings; and wherein he advances a scheme wholly remote from the subject matter. For what can be more remote than this, the prophet says to AHAZ, "You, AHAZ, are afraid of your enemies: but they shall not succeed; and I will prove it to you by a sign." And upon AHAZ's refusing a sign, "the prophet says, "You shall have a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, &c. meaning, according to Mr. Green, by those words, *Behold a virgin shall conceive, &c.* no sign at all, but making that conception, which is a matter wholly foreign to the affair of success against the two kings, to be the thing signified, and the success against the two kings, which was visibly the thing to be signified, the sign of an event [not at all pertinent to the matter] to happen seven hundred years after?

This is manifestly to make the prophet not talk *ad idem*, and to be guilty of the greatest incoherence and rhapsody imaginable, and that in opposition to the plainest, most natural and most coherent, and most reasonable sense imaginable.

And as this interpretation of Mr. Green is to the last degree inconsistent with the text, and perfectly wild and enthusiastick; so the steps, by which he would introduce it, are

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false

false in themselves, and entirely without foundation.

1. First, there is no colour to make SHEAR-JASHUB the *child* in question, but the contrary, as has been shewn already.

2. Secondly, it is an exprefs contradiction to the text, to say, the *virgin's conception and bearing a son* is not the sign given by the prophet, as I have before shewn. It is also, as I conceive, a contradiction to all other interpreters, who, tho' they interpret the *virgin* to mean the *virgin MARY*, yet still, in conformity with the exprefs words of *Isaiah*, continue to make the *virgin* the *sign* of an intended event.

3. Thirdly, to talk of the *Jews staggering thro' unbelief at the promise, that the Messiah should be born of the house of David in the present circumstances*, and to build on that notion, and to comment on the text as supposing it, when there is so far from being a word about such *staggering* in the matter of the *Messiah*, that there is not a word, that implies the least notion of a *Messiah* known to the *Jews* or to *ISAIAH* himself, is in reality to say any thing, and invent any thing to serve a purpose, and implies a liberty to construe a book to any purpose whatsoever, in opposition to the plainest and most obvious sense.

So that his very foundation, viz. that success against the two kings was a *sign* of the *Messiah*, has nothing to support it, but his mere imagination: and it is no less absurd to introduce such a scheme, as the event of a *Messiah*, than to pervert *ISAIAH*, by making his *sign* to be the thing signified, and the thing proposed by him to be signified to be the *sign*. And I conceive, it is not possible to  
con-

consider any person making a more wild interpretation of a place, and under greater distress to account for a text before him, than Mr. Green : who cannot be allowed to make sufficient amends for his conduct, by a sort of ingenuity at the close, when he supposes, that \* *you or others, may raise objections to his interpretation, which he may not be able to answer ;* which ingenuity he, at the same time, most inconsistently gives up, by his daring to say, that his sense *seems* to him *the most natural sense* of the place : I say, *daring to say* ; for can any thing be less modest, than to affirm, that to be the *most natural sense* of a place, which is so manifestly repugnant to the text, and which he himself gives us as wholly new, and which he says may have objections made to it, which he may not be able to answer. \* Letter, p. 85.

You have in your book cited many great authorities for your sense of the place. To these I could add many more : But I will content myself with the great archbishop TILLOTSON ; observing, first, how proper it is to cite authorities in the case to one, who uses an assuming and invidious way of controversy, in pretending to vindicate St. MATTHEW, and to throw him at you, when the Question is, what St. MATTHEW means, and when the greatest divines understand St. MATTHEW, as you do. † *It was foretold, says TILLOTSON, that the Messiah should be born of a virgin, Isa. vii. 14. which you see, accordingly fulfilled, Matt. i. That this is not the primary, but the mystical sense of that place in ISAIAH, I think may, without prejudice, be granted to the Jews, who, in innumerable places of the old testament, do,*

† Sermons,  
Vol. 13.  
p. 34.



*besides the first and-literal sense, allow of a mystical one.*

To conclude this article, can any one more expose St. MATTHEW and *christianity* to contempt than Mr. Green has done ; by supposing the explication of a prophecy of ISAIAH, that is necessary to defend St. MATTHEW's application, not *hit* on before that given by him ; and by introducing a *new exposition* of his own thereof, and that an *exposition* of such a nature, as if allow'd, will subject the bible to any meaning whatever, that the weak or crafty think fit to put upon it ; and by supposing another *exposition* may be found out, in case his will not *serve* the turn ? St. MATTHEW has hereby a defence made for him, which may be very remote and perhaps never come, or rather no defence at all, and is left exposed to an insuperable objection, or objection that cannot be answered, in order to avoid your *mystical hypothesis*, if that may be called yours, which you maintain in common with so many learned divines.

#### IV.

Mr. Green in his fifth *letter* proposes to consider, the || *four* other prophecies, cited in the new testament, which you instanced in, as not *literally*, but *typically* and *mystically* apply'd in the new testament, and upon them to *say as little as may be*.

|| *Letters*,  
p. 86.

That *little* I shall answer in less compass.  
I observe on the *first* of these prophecies,  
*Out of Egypt have I call'd my son* ; that he de-  
nies

nies, both in opposition to most interpreters [and particularly to the learned Mr. JAMES PEIRCE, who, on this occasion most judiciously says, that \* "when a text is cited in the \* *Para-*  
 "manner this is, and it is said, such a *phrase on*  
 "thing was done, THAT it might be fulfil'd *the Phi-*  
 "which was spoken, he always esteems the pas- *lippians,*  
 "sage cited to be a direct prophecy of that *p. 99.*  
 "particular event, and that it belongs to that  
 "event"] and to St. MATTHEW himself, that † *this passage is not quoted as a prediction of* † *Letters*  
*any future event, I say, in opposition to St. MAT-* *p. 91.*  
 THEW, who expressly says, CHRIST went in-  
 to Egypt, that it might be fulfilled which was spo-  
 ken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt  
 have I call'd my son; and that he perverts the  
 sense of the plainest expression in the case,  
 when he says, that other things, other words, other  
 passages of the old testament may be said to be fulfil'd,  
 besides the prophecies and predictions of future events.  
 So that he is so far from proving this prophecy  
 to be a literal prophecy, that, in opposition to  
 the plainest words of St. MATTHEW, he de-  
 nies it to be a prophecy.

As to the next prophecy cited, viz. "JESUS's  
 "dwelling at Nazareth, that it might be ful-  
 "fill'd, which was spoken by the prophets,  
 "he shall be call'd Nazarene," he † freely owns, † *Ibid. p.*  
 that none of the prophets have so much as intimated, *86.*  
 that the Messiah was to dwell at Nazareth. And  
 consequently here is no foundation for suppo-  
 sing a literal accomplishment of a prophecy.

As to the prophecy of MALACHI, concern-  
 ing the coming of ELIJAH, apply'd in the  
 new testament to JOHN the baptist, he || al- || *Ibid. p.*  
 lows, that the apostle quits the literal sense of *87, 88.*  
 the prophet, and has recourse to the mystical  
 sense

*sense*, which he says, you ought to shew is *unnatural and absurd*. This is also yielding up the point to you, whose business it was to shew the prophecy not *literally*, but *mystically apply'd*, without entring into the question of the *absurdity* and *unnaturalness* of *mystical applications*, which you are so far from pretending to attack, that your book supposes them to be the proofs of the truth of christianity.

\* *Ibid.* p.  
89.

As to the last of the four, he \* says, he " may grant, that it is manifest, as you say, *that according to the literal sense, it relates to the obstinate Jews in the time of ISAIAH*. But " adds he, what hinders, that it may not also " relate, and in the same sense, to the obsti- " nate Jews, who liv'd in the time of JESUS."

What *hinders* such literal application is, the limitation of it, to be met with in the prophet himself, to a time to expire long before JESUS came into the world, as GROTIUS understands the place. And for your interpretation of it, as not *literally* belonging to the Jews in JESUS's time, take the interpretation of bishop KIDDER. He, in giving instances

† *Demonst.*  
*of the*  
*Messiah,*  
*vol. ii. p.*  
*216.*

of *accommodations* us'd in the new testament, † says, " the words of ISAIAH vi. 9. which " were spoken to those of his *own* time, are " said to be fulfill'd in those, who liv'd in our Sa- " viour's time and are accommodated to them."

‖ *Letters,*  
*p. 94, &c.*

There is but one thing more to be consider'd on the head we are now upon, and that is, his objection to you, for arguing from ‖ *five in- stances* of prophetick citations made out of the old in the new testament, and apply'd, not *literally* but *typically* therein, that all the other citations are apply'd in the same manner. *It is*, says he, *no good arguing from particulars to univer- sals.*



*sals.* But your conduct, when justly represented will vindicate it self, and shew that Mr. Green understands not the true notion of arguing in the case. You do indeed only give *five instances* of prophetick citations made out of the old in the new testament, as not LITERALLY but MYSTICALLY apply'd; rightly judging it not proper to enter into the full and long detail of all the prophetick citations. But then you assert, that you *have consider'd the rest, and find them all apply'd in the same manner.* And this seems a right method of proceeding: and the true answer to be given to it, is, not by saying, there is *no arguing from particulars to universals*, but to name an instance to you, of a prophecy *literally apply'd*; who deny there is any one such; and who only give *five instances*, as a specimen, how the apostles apply the prophecies; and who should be ready to give an answer to any instance, that an adversary should think fit to alledge.

## V.

I now proceed to his *critique* and charge upon you, with respect to your numerous quotations of authors.

He says, † *It is a little odd, that when you admit of no authority as sacred, you should seem so fond of supporting almost every thing you advance by some writer or other of note, and be sometimes carried so far by this passion, as to apply his words to a purpose, that never entred into his thoughts.* † *Letters, p. 25.*

But why should it seem *odd* for you, to express your sense in the words of some writer of note? Why may not you argue *ad hominem*? Does not such a way of writing produce attention

tention to you, when, perhaps, otherwise there would be none? Does not the supporting your notions by the *authority* of *writers of note* justly obviate and prevent all *invidious* reflections and terms of reproach on account of the said notions, which you assert in common with the most learned divines? And is not Mr. *Green's* dislike to this, which is undoubtedly an innocent thing, a proof, that he is concern'd, you should appear to be in so good company, as he probably thinks the authors, you cite, may be? And why may not you quote STILLINGFLEET and other authors, as well as Mr. *Green*; who with more justice may be said to *admit* of *no authority as sacred*, than you: for he, as I have observ'd, determines, from schemes and reasonings of his own, what God ought to do, in order to settle a sense on the bible, which he cannot make out from the rules of grammar and criticism; and you, in your book, take every thing for granted in the bible, and propose to be determin'd by the bible, understood according to the rules of grammar and criticism, without advancing any scheme of your own, as a rule, to settle the sense thereof. And whoever will confute you must prove the bible to be against you; for to that you appeal. It is therefore absurd in disputation, as well as malicious, to assert, you *submit* to *no authority*, who *submit* to the bible, as the rule by which to determine your controversy. Besides, he himself is guilty of the contradiction of urging you with the authority of the new testament for the sense of the old; tho' he attacks you here, for *not admitting any authority*.

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As to his charge against you of *applying* the words of authors to a purpose, that never entered into their thoughts; that, when it is a misrepresentation of their sense, is a fault, and should be owned and amended, when known. And, in order to it, I shall consider his attack upon you on this head.

You have in your book made, as I take it, several hundred quotations; out of which he, in several places of his letters, instances in six as misrepresentations of the sense of the authors you cite.

1. The \* term *difficulties*, cited by you out of \* Letters. PRIDEAUX, is cited by you in a mistaken p. 22. sense. And this I conceive is the only real mistaken quotation among those wherewith he charges you.

2. The second quotation, for which he attacks you, † seems to him to be a *misrepresentation*. † Ib. p. 23. But, I believe, it will not seem so to any body else. For, tho' interpolations of the bible, whereof no notice † is given, may be deemed by you *corruptions*, yet you no where charge those who allow of *interpolations*, with allowing *corruptions*. You know very well, that some of them contend; that those || *interpolations* were made for the completing the Scriptures; and that the authors of them were no less inspired by the Holy Ghost, [to make the said *interpolations*] than the original authors of those books, who wrote them in an *incomplete* manner. And you expressly distinguish between \* Mr. WHISTON, who speaks of the bible as \* Disc. greatly corrupted, and Dr. PRIDEAUX and others, p. 135-137. who speak of it as only *interpolated*, without the least insinuation, that the latter take an *interpolation* to be a *corruption*. Nor does your

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persuasion, that an *interpolation* under the fore-  
said circumstance is a *corruption*, in the least  
imply, that Dr. PRIDEAUX and those others  
must think so too.

3. His next instance is a charge of *misre-  
presentation* in respect of STILLINGFLEET.  
You cite this passage, *that miracles, as splendid  
gifts as they are, are no demonstrations of the truth,*  
and for this citation you refer to Dr. HICKS,  
whose express words they are, and to Dr. STIL-  
LINGFLEET. But as to Dr. STILLINGFLEET,  
he is *persuaded*, upon the perusal of his book,

\* *Ib.*

p. 25.

† *Orig. Sa-  
cra l. 11.*

c. 6. f. 16.

\* *that there is nothing like it in all his book.* I do  
not pretend to help his eyes or his understand-  
ing; but for others, I refer them to the † sec-  
tion you cite, which is wholly grounded on  
the supposition, that miracles are no *demon-  
strations*.

|| *Diso.*

p. 172.

\* *Letters.*

p. 5.

4. You || say of FESTUS, mentioned in  
the *Acts*, that he was expert in all customs and  
questions among the Jews. This Mr. Green ob-  
serves \* *is the character, in the Acts, not of FES-  
TUS, but of AGRIPPA.* This is very true,  
and the mistake was soon corrected in the  
second edition of your book, long before Mr.  
Green published his letters. By which it will  
appear to be a mere error of the printer or  
transcriber entering wrong a marginal pas-  
sage.

5. His next instance is a charge of mis-  
taking † Dean STANHOPE in relation to what  
he says of *miracles*. He denies not the words  
to be rightly cited by you. And, as to the  
sense of them, he acknowledges, that the  
Dean speaking against those, who look on miracles  
as the adequate and sole foundation of faith, seems  
in the passage to advance the argument for chris-  
tianity

† *Ib. p. 52.*

tianity from prophecy to the prejudice of the argument for it from miracles; and that the Dean was not sufficiently cautious in expressing himself. And he urges another passage out of the Dean to prove the Dean's want of caution, and that you have mistaken his meaning. But that passage has no opposition to the former, as it is understood by you; and as it is meant by the Dean, for there is no colour for Mr. Green to attack the Dean for incautiously expressing himself. It is very odd for Mr. Green to charge you with misrepresentations of a person whom he corrects, as expressing himself incautiously, or agreeably to your sense, and then to make your misrepresentation of him, to lie in not understanding him, according to his unjust, [or ever just] correction of him.

6. His sixth and last instance is a charge of mistaking again Dean STANHOPE, whom you \* cite for saying, 'tis possible in the consideration of single prophecies to find out some other event *\* Disc. P. 44.* [besides JESUS and the matters relating to him] to which these might be adapted without great violence to the text, and whom you understand as speaking therein of every individual prophecy. And can any thing be plainer, or more universally expressed and to your purpose, than his assertion? And the passage immediately subjoined by the Dean, and cited by Mr. Green, as inconsistent with the Dean's affirming, what you suppose he does of every individual prophecy, is so far from being really inconsistent with such affirmation, that it proceeds on that very supposition, as the intelligent reader may see.

I might in return to Mr. GREEN, attack him for his perpetual misrepresentations of persons

sons and things: for I do not recollect, that he has made one observation that affects you, [except in relation to the word *difficulties*] but is founded on some mistake or misrepresentation, and setting things in a false light. This has in great measure appear'd by my answer to him; and that I may not be tiresome, I submit the rest to the reader. I will only observe, that he neither understands his adversary, nor even his own scheme. Indeed, he seems not to know what he is about, but when he is abusive. That part of *vulgar theology* he may be allow'd to understand well, as well as truly to practise.

That he does not understand his own scheme, appears by his talking of miracles \* *really and seemingly done*, in the case of AARON and the magicians. Which not only destroys the very supposition or being of any miracles, [for if the † *miracles* of the *magicians* are supposed only to be *seemingly done*, the authority of the senses is denied, and no proof can be given, that AARON or any body else ever did *miracles*] but is particularly inconsistent with the scheme he himself builds on, which supposes and asserts, that the *miracles* of the *magicians* were *really done*.

And that he does not understand your scheme, appears from his saying, || *your business here, if you would do any thing against christianity, is to shew, that this you call the mystical sense is unnatural and absurd*. Your business was, as I think, to prove, that the *mystical scheme* was the *christian scheme* of things [which *mystical scheme* you have endeavour'd to unfold by explications taken from the most profound and learned christian rabbinical theologers] without the least design or

\* *Letters*,  
p. 32.

† See  
Fleet-  
wood, *ib*.  
p. 23.

|| *Letters*,  
p. 88.



or thought, as it seems, of labouring to prove, that *mystical scheme to be unnatural and absurd*. Nay, I am sincerely persuaded, that you must think such an attempt to be a most needless, and most impertinent work, as well as inconsistent with your plan. To have the *mystical scheme deem'd unnatural and absurd*, seems the design of your adversaries; who generally think it so manifestly *absurd and unnatural*, as to conclude you an unbeliever, for advancing that *scheme*; which they think needs no confutation. In a word, Mr. Green has plainly *no ears to hear*; and till he has got *ears*, it is impossible for him to judge of sounds.

Lastly, there is a mistaken way of arguing [to say nothing worse of it] that runs thro' his whole disputation. Therein he ought as a *disputant* to have attack'd *propositions* in themselves, and not you as an enemy to *christianity*, who propose those *propositions*, not in the way of opposition to *christianity*, but as *christian propositions*, and as the sense of the bible, which you support by the authority of the most eminent divines. *Views* and designs are invisible things, and, not being the matters asserted, are not the subjects of *disputation*, or matters in question, how justly soever they may be imputed. Dean SHERLOCK, when he enters upon his matter against you, begins in in this common theological way by saying, that you have \* taken great pains, to shew, that the argument from prophecy for the truth of christianity, as managed and apply'd by the writers of the new testament is absurd and ridiculous; and that we may not flatter our selves with hopes of assistance from other arguments, you give us this text of PETER, viz. 2 Pet. i. 19. to shew by the authority of our own

\* Sher-  
lock's Use  
&c. p. 3.

own scriptures, that prophecy, as bad an argument as it is, is nevertheless the very best, that our cause affords: but then he waves this reflection in the next words, by saying, *But your views be to your self, what truth there is in your exposition, and application of this part of scripture, we shall soon see*; the Dean rightly judging, that his business was only to dispute against the things asserted by you.

Should I, for example, represent Mr. Green, as writing his letters to you, in order to get a little credit among old women and a small livelihood, and to raise the indignation of the mob against you; and should I treat his exposition of ISAIAH, as a most pitiful project, and not deserving the raising his hire or pay, or indeed any pay at all, and not proper to stir the passions of the people, and should say to him, "Sir, if you would do any thing to merit credit and pay, and to inflame the people, by explaining ISAIAH, against the author of the discourse of the grounds, you should give us, out of the inexhaustible stock of theology, an exposition, that savour'd of a more exalted enthusiasm, and not such an exposition, so low and flat, and so obviously false, as shews to every body the utmost distress you are in to support what you pretend is the cause of christianity, and manifestly gives the advantage in point of truth to an exposition [suppos'd destructive of christianity] of the author of the discourse of the grounds, if that exposition may be called his, which is the most common exposition, and indeed the most manifest sense of the place." But is such a way of writing to be justify'd, in any case, except in the way  
of

of retorsion, to teach men better morality,  
and the true method of disputation ?

## VII.

I proceed now to the consideration of a matter, which, though I have reserv'd for a conclusion of what I shall say, yet was the sole end of my writing this letter. For I should never have troubled myself to have attack'd his reasonings, if I had not thought fit to have attack'd his *immoral assault* upon you ; which I do, not for his sake, whom I do not pretend to make ashamed of it, but for the sake of others, that such persons may be noted.

After he has laid down these two propositions ; first, \* *That there is a God* ; secondly, *That there is some duty that we owe unto him*, he adds, *I say nothing for the confirmation of those propositions, because I am writing to one who has not* OPENLY *professed himself an enemy to natural religion.*

\* Letters,  
p. 26.

In answer to which I observe, *first*, That the insinuation contain'd therein serves no purpose of the controversy. *Secondly*, That if such liberty be allow'd in controversy, there is no end of abuses ; and controversies must be, as indeed they too commonly are, little else besides scolding. For what abuses may not be insinuated, if reports and imaginations are allowed to be grounds sufficient to bring in such foreign matters ; and what are such matters, but scolding ? *Thirdly*, This insinuation might, on many accounts, have been let alone ; and especially since Mr. Green could not well hope, in virtue of his



his [sectarian] credit, and under the present anti-high church, anti-presbyterian, anti-popish, anti-hobbian, and truly christian state of affairs among us, to set the magistrate or mob upon you, by his calumnies. Why should he shew his willingness to cut a man's throat, when he is so impotent? The spirit of his *trade* or *craft*, or of his *religion* or *irreligion*, must needs be very predominant in him. *Fourthly*, That such insinuations carry always with them greater evidence of their truth in the person who makes them, than in the person on whom they are thrown, and ought ever to be retorted. The truth of which is grounded on one of the most common observations among men; which I will give you in the words of an ingenious modern philosopher, who says to a reverend presbyterian divine, *How came it into your mind, that a man can be an atheist? I know DAVID confesseth of himself, upon the sight of the prosperity of the wicked, that his feet had almost slipp'd into a short doubtfulness of the divine providence. And if any thing else can cause a man to slip in the same kind, it is the seeing such as you, who, though you write nothing but what is dictated to you by some doctor in divinity, to break through the greatest of God's commandments, (which is charity,) in every line before his face. -- But how, I say, could you think me an atheist, unless it were, because finding your doubts of the deity more frequent than other men do, you are thereby the apter to fall into that kind of reproach? Wherein you are like women of poor and evil education when they scold; among whom the readiest disgraceful word is whore: why not theif, or any other ill name, but because, when they re-*  
*member*

*member themselves, they think that reproach the likeliest to be true? And this observation, I shall take leave further to support by a passage from Mr. GREEN himself. He is pleased to say, \* "It is the observation of an \* Letters, ingenious Author, that truth is always near p. 40.*  
*"at hand, fits upon our lips, and is ready  
 "to drop from us before we are aware. Of this,  
 "he says, you have given us an instance,  
 "p. 37. where you tell us, that God can never  
 "be supposed OFTEN to permit miracles to be  
 "done for the confirmation of a false or pretended  
 "mission."*

Upon which I observe, that it seems very extraordinary to suppose such an origin for any truth advanced by you; who may as justly be thought to consider what you say, and to design to *spe*ak truth, as to *spe*ak it only before you are aware. And I think such a reflection, so unjust, with respect to you, must proceed from one who was well acquainted with the character of persons; who have not truth in view, and if it drops from them, *spe*ak it before they are aware; and who have in view to *spe*ak and subscribe, what they are hir'd to *spe*ak, as some, I know, profess to do.

He concludes his last letter with saying, that † it is his hearty desire, that you would † Letters, seriously review your own work and be con- p. 103.  
 vinc'd of your mistakes, and so be brought to the acknowledgement of the truth, that is, to what Mr. Green thinks the truth, or what he thinks fit to say is the truth.

I cannot in conscience make him a wish of the like kind; being perswaded, that the virtue and excellency of man, and that for which he will be rewarded by God, does not lie in being free from *mistakes*, or in agreeing in opinion with any man, but in the *love of truth* as such. And therefore, instead of a *heartly desire*; that he may agree with you or me, or any one else, or may be free from *mistakes*, my *heartly desire* is, that he and all men would be *lovers of truth*, for *truth's* sake, and lay aside *education*, and *interest*, and all *prejudices* in the taking up and maintaining opinions: which, if they do, they cannot hurt themselves by any *mistaken opinions* they can fall into. *Mistaken opinions* can hurt none, but those, who do not impartially search after truth.

Having done with Mr. GREEN, I shall conclude to you.

Though the world may excuse you from entering the lists against Mr. GREEN, and may think it sufficient for a friend to perform that part for you; yet it is expected, that something should be said by you to your other adversaries, and particularly to the right reverend the lord bishop of *Litchfield and Coventry*. And I am not without hopes, that you will answer the publick expectation, and take the occasion offer'd you of setting in a just light the *question* of a *Messiah*; which, though it be the most important question in christianity, and that upon which whole christianity is built, has not, that I know of, had that justice done to it, whereof it is capable, and which  
you



you are particularly qualified to do to it,  
by virtue of your reading, observations,  
freedom of Mind, independency of fortune,  
and absolute contempt of any other interest  
but that of truth.

*I am, Sir,*

*April 23.  
1726.*

*Your most humble Servant.*

**K 2**

**POST.**

## P O S T S C R I P T.

SINCE the finishing this letter, I have received Dr. LOBB's *Brief Defence*, &c. which I shall make some animadversions on, as having a view to your *Discourse of the Grounds*, &c.

\* Pref.  
p. xi.

He says, \* *there is a modern, sophistical objection against miracles being a proof of the truth of the christian religion, which, though it has been well answered by some, [viz. Mr. Bullock and Mr. Green] he begs leave to shew the vanity and weakness of. The objection, he says, is this :*

“ That miracles can never render a foundation valid, which is in itself invalid;  
“ can never make a false inference true;  
“ can never make a prophecy fulfilled,  
“ which is not fulfilled; can never make  
“ those things to be spoken concerning  
“ christ, which were not spoken concerning  
“ christ; and consequently, that the miracles  
“ said to have been work'd by christ, could not  
“ possibly have been work'd by him; but must, of  
“ necessity, together with the whole system, both of  
“ the old and new testament, have been wholly the  
“ effect of imagination, and enthusiasm, if not of  
“ imposture.”

I. But where is this citation to be met with; that he calls an *objection*, which has been well answered by Mr. Bullock and Mr. Green. It is not to be found [in their answers,  
nor]

nor] in your book, which has only the \* \* *Dist.*  
 first words of the citation; all the latter *p. 31, 32.*  
 part, which I have put in *Italick* character,  
 being falsely and maliciously added by Dr.  
 LOBB, as if your words. There is, indeed,  
 a learned † Author, who, after quoting your  
 words, as above recited, adds the words I  
 have printed in *Italick*; but that he does as  
 his own inference from yours, and not as  
 your words. But how will that justify Dr.  
 LOBB's making the citation, as he gives it  
 us, your *objection*? Is the representation of  
 your sense by an adversary to be taken  
 for a citation from you, and for an *objection*  
 of yours? Is this a fair method of proceed-  
 ing for a man, either with your book in his  
 hand or at least every where to be seen, to  
 go to an adversary's book for an objection of  
 yours; and what is still worse, to an adver-  
 sary, who does not pretend to give those  
 words above recited in *Italick* character,  
 which Dr. LOBB attributes to you, as your  
 words, but only as his own inference; and  
 whom therefore the Doctor transcribes, and  
 misrepresents, in order to put a false *objec-*  
*tion* and citation upon you, and to give a  
 malicious representation of you? Besides, the  
 learned author himself was manifestly mis-  
 taken in his inference. For how does it fol-  
 low from these propositions of yours, "That  
 "miracles can never render a foundation  
 "valid, which is in itself invalid; can  
 "never make a false inference true; can  
 "never make a prophecy fulfilled, which  
 "is not fulfilled; can never make those  
 "things to be spoken concerning Christ,  
 "which were not spoken concerning Christ,"  
 how

† Clark's  
*Disc. of*  
*the con-*  
*nection,*  
*&c. p. 6.*



how does it follow, I say, that the miracles said to have been worked by Christ could not possibly have been really worked by him; but must of necessity, together with the whole system of the old and new testament, have been wholly the effect of imagination and enthusiasm, if not of imposture? And this inference, both the learned author, and Dr. LOBB themselves must judge to be a false inference, unless they think the whole system both of the old and new testament to have been wholly the effect of enthusiasm, if not of imposture: for they both own the premises to be true, and contend expressly with you, \* that miracles can never render a foundation valid, which is in itself invalid, &c.

\* Clark,  
p. 28.  
Lobb,  
p. xi, xii.

This seems a most dishonest method of proceeding in Dr. LOBB; and I make that charge here upon him for this matter; who is pleased to charge his adversaries with † dishonest methods, without assigning one instance thereof to support his charge.

† p. vii.

II. So much of the words of the citation or objection, as are yours, are self-evident propositions, and are not urg'd by you as an objection to miracles being a proof of the truth of the Christian religion, but as an objection to their being a proof, on the supposition, that the Messiahship of JESUS of Nazareth cannot be made out from the old testament. And your objection is rightly understood and confirm'd by Dean SHERLOCK, as a just and Christian observation, who says, || *Whether JESUS is the person, or no, promised by MOSES and the prophets, must be tried by the words of prophecy: and that it has been very justly, as well as acutely observ'd, that the proof of this point must rely entirely on the evidence of prophecy. Miracles,*

|| Sher-  
lock's Use,  
&c. p. 49.

acles, says the Dean, in this case afford no help: if the prophets have not spoken of Christ, all the miracles in the world will not prove, that they have spoken of him.

So that Dr. LOBB is utterly mistaken in asserting your objection to be an objection against miracles being a proof of the truth of christianity: and moreover, by owning the truth of your objection, he owns it to be a just objection to miracles being a proof of the truth of christianity.

III. It should therefore seem needless to consider his answers to an objection, which he mistakes the design of, as well as falsely cites. However, let us consider the three answers he pretends to give.

I. His first answer is, \* that indeed no manner of arguments can prove that to be true, which is false; or that foundation to be valid, which is in itself invalid; or a false inference to be true; or those prophecies to be fulfilled, which have not been fulfilled; or those things to be spoken concerning Christ, which were not spoken concerning him: and THUS FAR he AGREES with the OBJECTOR. But, adds he, how does it appear, that the foundation of the Christian religion is in itself invalid; or that any inference drawn by CHRIST or his apostles is false; or that any prophecy asserted by CHRIST or his apostles to have been fulfilled, has not been fulfilled; or that any thing they say was spoken concerning CHRIST, was not spoken concerning him? None of these particulars have been prov'd, and therefore the objection is groundless and impertinent; and besides the allegations to support it have been confuted.

\* p. xii.

Herein he gives up the point; for when he says, *he thus far agrees with the objector*, he agrees with you in all you say. And as to his asking *how it appears, that the foundation of the Christian religion is in itself invalid &c.*; what has that to do with the truth of your observation? The *invalidity* of the foundation of christianity is not denied in it, [or any where else by you] but is merely supposed here in the way of argument; and your observation is equally true, whether the foundation of christianity be in itself valid or invalid. The *pertinency* of your observation, which Dr. Lobb calls *groundless and impertinent*, and Dean Sherlock calls *just and acute*, lies in this; that miracles prove nothing in the case of the application of old testament prophecies, which are only to be judg'd pertinently or impertinently applied, from the consideration of their sense, as they stand in the old testament; much less do miracles prove any thing in case the prophecies are misapplied.

\* p. xiii.

His second answer is, that \* *though no arguments can prove a proposition to be true, which is in itself false; yet miracles may confirm a true testimony, the truth of which might not otherwise be so evident; and may make those declarations to appear true, the truth whereof could not otherwise be so clearly demonstrated.*

Herein also he yields to the truth of your observation, and asserts the same thing you do. And as to his saying *miracles may confirm a true testimony, the truth of which might not otherwise be so evident*; he himself very justly asserts that, as consistent with the said observation; and consequently cannot make that assertion



fection to invalidate the *observation*, without being inconsistent with himself. I add, with respect to the truth of the proposition, that *miracles may confirm a true testimony, the truth whereof might not otherwise be so evident*; that if he would make out that proposition by reason, he should prove that miracles [which, as all agree, may be done by beings inferior to God, and even by evil beings] are certain marks of the veracity, as well as power of their author.

His third answer is, \* *that nothing can be* \* p. xv. *more certain, than that the christian religion was confirm'd by miracles; that consequently nothing can be more certain, than the truth of the christian religion; † and consequently, whatever doctrine is confirm'd by this evidence must be concluded undoubtedly true, notwithstanding ANY difficulties, that may attend it.* † p. xvii.

To this I reply, that this indeed is contradicting you, and also himself. For if *miracles will confirm doctrines, notwithstanding ANY difficulties in those doctrines*; they may then confirm interpretations of the old testament, which seem to us [or are] false; and may confirm *doctrines* which seem to us contrary to reason, and to the common notions of morality. *ANY difficulty, as for example, a difficulty which cannot be answer'd* [as || Dr. || p. 97. LOBB elsewhere expresses it] is a *demonstration* of the falshood of the proposition to which it lies: and it manifestly is so of a probable proposition or proposition grounded on probable evidence, and particularly in the case of miracles; which admit only of probable evidence, that they were ever done, and can in themselves be pretended only to be probable

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bable proofs of the truth of propositions. And it can only be probable, that they are probable proofs of the truth of propositions. And if a *difficulty which cannot be answer'd* is a demonstration of the falshood of the proposition against which it lies, then to assert that *whatever doctrine is confirm'd by miracles must be undoubtedly true, notwithstanding ANY difficulties that may attend it*, is all one as to say, that *miracles will prove, what is false to be true*.

Thus I have consider'd the only direct attack, that Dr. LOBB has made upon you; which since he was capable of grounding on a false quotation; a quotation not to be found in your book; a quotation, which, tho' to be found in one of your adversary's books, is, as it stands there, partly a quotation from you, and partly an inference of that adversary, and by consequence a false quotation in Dr. LOBB, even from that Author; and, in fine, a quotation, so far as it consists of your words, misrepresented by that author, who comments falsely upon it; I say since he was *capable* of this, the reader may easily imagine, what his work, wherein he more generally and covertly expresses himself, must be, and how thick set it must be with mistakes and false colours. And to his reader I leave him. I will only add a few *observations* on some particulars of his work, which may be of use to those, who write after him on the same argument.

1. That since men pretend to write against the *deists*, and to prove the truth of christianity to them; and since they pretend,

\* *Pr. p. v.* that \* *there are many solid arguments, which demonstrate the truth of it*; it is my humble opinion

nion, that they should not call upon the *deists* \* to shew, that God never bore witness to the \* *Ib. see* truth of the gospel, and that the evidences insisted on *also p. xv.* to prove the affirmative, never existed. This puts *xvi.* the *deists* upon an unreasonable hardship; who may justly require proofs from those, who would impose a reveal'd religion on them; and who may justly think it sufficient, either merely to deny, till proofs are produc'd, or to invalidate the proofs produc'd. It seems strange to require them to prove the falshood of a revelation [that is, indeed, of every suppos'd revelation] which may be offer'd to them! that is, to prove every body in the wrong they think mistaken!

It is also my opinion, that in arguing with *deists*, and in proving the truth of *christianity* to them, men should not argue from the || *facts* or *miracles*, as related in the new testa- || *Defence,* ment, till they have prov'd the divine au- *p. 14. 43.* thority of the books of the new testament. Which yet Dr. LOBB does, without offering any other proof of their authority, but what is contain'd in these four general propositions:

1. † That the writers of those historical accounts † *p. 13.* contain'd in the holy scriptures, knew them to be true.
2. That they were men of known integrity; and, manifestly, neither had, nor could have any worldly interest to induce them to give a false account of things; nay, that the writing and publishing the accounts we have in their books was plainly against their worldly interest, and expos'd them to many hazards, and grievous suffering.
3. That, th<sup>t</sup> they publish'd their accounts, when they might easily have been disprov'd, if false, yet they were never disprov'd by any Enemies.
4. That the extraordi-



nary witness and testimony of God not only attended them, but those that believ'd their history, and their doctrine; those that obey'd the gospel, they preach'd, and embrac'd the religion they taught.

\* p. 26,  
38.

† Dis. of the  
Grounds.  
p. 30.

\* Ib. p.  
206.

I also conceive it to be no good manner of arguing with the deists, to prove, that \* the christian religion was confirm'd by the distributions or gifts of the holy ghost, and by other miracles, from some of the first fathers of the church [whom Dr. LOBB quotes from WHITBY] down to the third century, asserting that the gifts of the spirit and the power to do miracles, existed in their times. The primitive fathers were such miracle-mongers, and were either so impos'd on by the false relations of others or such forgers of them; as that instead of verifying the truth of the miracles they report, they serve only to depretiate the force of testimony in the case of miracles. † *Tanta fuit primis sæculis*, says the learned and pious Bishop FELL, as cited by you, *fungendi licentia, tam prona in credendo facilitas, ut rerum gestarum fides graviter exinde laboraverit; nec orbis tantum terrarum, sed & dei ecclesia de temporibus suis mythicis merito queratur*. And Mr. DODWEL, who was a remarkable admirer of the fathers, as well as most-knowing in their Writings, gives this as a reason for not defending his dissertation concerning the paucity of the martyrs, viz. \* the great veneration he had for the goodness and piety of several of the fathers, who, he says, were too easy of belief of matter of fact, not sufficiently attested. Besides, I do not see, why Dr. LOBB should confine miracles to the beginning of the third century. For if there is any truth in ecclesiastical history, miracles appear to have been more frequent and numerous afterwards, and

and especially as popery prevail'd ; under which, not only numerous miracles, in all places, are said to have been done, but are also attested in most ample manner, and most particular enquiries have been made into the truth of the miracles of those, who, upon account of the miracles wrought by them, have been *canonized for saints* ; as appears by the *Acts of their canonization*.

II. Secondly, I conceive that the writers against the *deists* do not argue from a good topick, when they say, \* *It is an easy matter for men of parts and learning, to puzzle common people in the plainest cases, and to start difficulties, and raise objections against the most evident truths ; and so artificially to put propositions together, as to make false conclusions seem naturally to follow from them ; and when they infer from the evidence they bring in behalf of christianity, that men may be sure of its truth, though there should be ten thousand difficulties objected to it, which they are not able to answer.*

Will not such topicks serve any cause, and may they not be turn'd, with advantage, upon the advocates of christianity ; which has all the education, all the interest and power in these parts of the world, on its side ; and consequently, therefore, almost all the men of parts and learning on its side, who know how to puzzle the common people in the plainest cases, and to start difficulties against the most evident truths, and so artificially put propositions together, as to make false conclusions seem naturally to follow from them, and who, among other topicks of persuasion, pretend, that a man ought to assent to propositions upon the proofs they give of their truth, though there should be ten thousand

\* Defence,  
p. 96, 91.

*thousand difficulties objected, which he is not able to answer.*

III. Lastly I conceive, that in writing against the *deists*, they should not be treated as \* *men of guilt*, and as in a *dangerous state*, on account of their supposed errors, [which ought to be deemed involuntary] and for publishing them to the world. To treat men after this manner for opinions, which they are led into by their enquiries into the truth of things, is stopping all enquiry into truth, and subjecting them to a mere *Lobbian* authority, and, in a word, putting them into a most irrational and absurd state. For if men can be *guilty* of sin, and in a *dangerous state* for any opinions, they take up with, in virtue of their *enquiries*, what *enquiries* will it be allowed men *safely* to make? What marks, except the dictates of Dr. LOBB, or others like him, are there, whereby to know, what opinions may be innocently assented to, in virtue of enquiries, and what not? And will not any one, who is so weak as to be terrified with the fear of *danger* in embracing opinions, which are the effect of enquiry, naturally lay aside all enquiries, and take up with the authority of a LOBB for the opinions he receives? And indeed, if through fear of *danger* in enquiries, you lay aside enquiries, and yet think it necessary to have opinions, nothing remains but to follow some of the different LOBBs, who will all assure you, that if you will follow their method, you may be *sure* † of being in the right, and of being in a safe state; but that if you take another method, you will

*certainly*

\* p. 104,  
106.

† *Ibid.*  
p. 97.



certainly be mistaken, and be in a dangerous state.

But what can be more absurd, than for any man to take such superior airs to himself, and to assume to himself the sole right of maintaining and publishing opinions, and to pretend himself to be *guilty* of no fault, but praise-worthy in maintaining and publishing his opinions, and to charge others with *guilt* for maintaining and publishing their opinions; who have an equal right with him, to think for themselves, and who have an equal right to be thought to pursue truth, and to be upright in their enquiries, and ought not to be deemed less upright in their enquiries, and worse pursuers of truth, for subjecting themselves to the reproach of the mob, the bigots, and the interested, and despising the common [quack] methods, which are visibly the way to power and wealth? And let me add, that when men, who are all equal in the matter before us, pretend to give themselves superior airs, they lay as just a prejudice in their way from being listen'd to, as others do, who pretend to have infallible medicines, and blame those who will not receive their infallible medicines. Modesty claims attention, but confidence in the case justly produces contempt: and the best and most favourable construction, that can be put upon all \* solemn and pathetic expostulations \* *Ibid.* and exhortations in the case, is to deem *p. 83, 114.* them the effects of *enthusiasm*, as undoubtedly they sometimes are.

April 30. 1726.

Addi-

## *Addition to the Postscript.*

May 11.

**Y**esterday was brought to me, a Review of the controversy between the author of the *Discourse of the grounds and reasons of the christian religion* and his adversaries, in a letter to that author; which, I'm told, is written by a minister of the gospel in the West of England. And I take the occasion now offer'd me to recommend this gentleman to you and to introduce him into your acquaintance. For in my opinion, whoever reads him, will be improv'd in his morals, by conversing with so polite a person, and in his notions of things by attending to the many judicious observations which occur throughout his book. And I cannot but hope for great good from his work; as it puts [positive] religion upon the foot of enquiry and reason, and allows all men to have an equal right to publish their thoughts, in the following remarkably reasonable and equitable observation offer'd to you. *I am,*

\* p. 268. *says he, \* so far from grudging you the liberty of proposing any difficulties relating to christianity, that I heartily wish it encreased: I think it very unbecoming to claim a liberty for our selves, which*

*we*

we are not willing to indulge to others. If christianity be not from God, I should rejoice to see its imposture detected: but as this is a matter of great consequence, and as it must be allow'd, that there are considerable things to be said for, as well as against it; so it is but fair to suffer the evidence on both sides to be brought into open light, and to let the whole matter be carefully and impartially consider'd. If christianity be a divine doctrine, you will do a great service to it, by giving learned men opportunity of carefully weighing those difficulties, that do attend it: If it be not a divine doctrine, upon a thorough examination of the matter, this will appear to all; mankind will be undeceiv'd, the divine honour will be retriev'd, and you will have a fair opportunity of setting religion on a true and solid foundation; in which you will be assisted by all candid, honest, and disinterested persons. To these most just thoughts, he subjoins a no less just expectation from you; who, I am sure, intirely concur with him in the sentiments therein contain'd, concerning the excellency of original, primitive christianity, christianity as deliver'd in the Scriptures, and the difference between that and christianity as taught by some modern priests and in the roman church. I am sensible, Sir, says he, that the vicious, the idle, and the interested part of christians are against such a free and impartial examination of things as I here propose; but I hope you will be so candid as to judge of the genius and spirit of christianity from its own rules, laid down in the original writings of the first disciples of our lord, and not from the corrupt notions which antichristianism has introduc'd, and the practice of a great number of weak and wicked men, in these latter ages, calling themselves christians. I hope what you

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have



have seen of the knavery of modern priests, will not breed a jealousy in you, concerning the designs of the ancients. I hope you will not judge of christianity by the genius and design of popery, any more than of natural religion, by heathenism, which are alike corruptions of true religion.

I have, in my foregoing papers, cited the ingenious Dean SHERLOCK against Mr. GREEN and Dr LOBB, for his approbation of your *assertion* concerning miracles, being no proof of christianity of themselves without prophecy; which *assertion* they have both thought fit to attack, as antichristian. Let me add two passages out of the no less ingenious author of the Review, who says to you, that he \* soon submitted to that clear evidence which you produc'd for miracles not being of themselves a sufficient proof of christianity; and now freely owns, that he is more thoroughly convinc'd of the strength of your reasonings on that head, from the weakness of your adversary's; and that † let a man work never so many miracles, as long as he did not answer the characters of the Messias in the old testament, the Jews had reason to reject him. But it is not only for their sakes, that I send you these two passages of our author, but also to take occasion to propose the consideration of the point to the most ingenious and learned author of the late *miscellanea sacra*, who says, \* christ must then [that is, in virtue of miracles, &c.] be submitted to, as the teacher and the king of God's people; and all that the apostles, his ambassadors, have taught or commanded us, from him, or from his spirit, must be receiv'd with faith and obedience, "Though we could not shew one old testament prophecy to re-late to him." If this notion can be defended against

\* p. 2.

† p. 6.

\* Vol. 1. p.  
117. it  
should be  
p. 200.

against these learned men [as well as against you] I am persuaded the author of *miscellanea sacra* can do it; who has all the talents necessary to defend all defensible points. And if it can be defended, I wish it were: for it seems highly proper to be done at a time, when so many learned men give up the point to you; who think it a *concession* of the utmost importance to you in your dispute, as, it is evident, the author of the *miscellanea sacra* also does.

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F I N I S.

**P**AGE 26. Line 3. *for* ; *read* , *ibid.* l. 12. *f.* Jael, *v.* Jaels ; p. 32. *f.* doctrines, *v.* doctrine ; *and f.* proof, *v.* proofs ; p. 37. l. 17. *f.* promsing, *v.* promising ; p. 59. l. 17. *f.* ever, *v.* even.